

The
STORY OF EDAH

MARY RUTH EVANS

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THE STORY OF EDAH

BY
MARY RUTH EVANS



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By

MARY RUTH EVANS SWAN

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THE AUTHOR

This book is dedicated in tender and loving affection, to the memory of "one who was, and is not, for God took her."

*" When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,
He'd 'eard men sing by land and sea ;
An' what he thought he might require,
'E went, and took--the same as me.*

*The market girls and fishermen
The shepherds an' the sailors too,
They 'eard old songs turn up again
But kep' it quiet—same as you.*

*They knew he stole, 'e knew they knowed
They didn't tell nor make a fuss
But winked at 'Omer down the road
And 'e winked back—the same as us."*

Rudyard Kipling.

He said, "She shall be my slave!

Lesser in all than I;

Feeble of body and brain.

She shall carry a golden chain,

And dwell until she die

In the golden cage I gave".

*And he found a treacherous creature of hate and
fear,*

*With teeth and claws that were ready when he came
near!*

He said, "She shall be my star!"

I will set her high above

This dusty world of mine.

I will bow me down at her shrine,

Pray for the light of her love,

And worship her from afar"

*But he found that the light of her love had been
withdrawn,*

Leaving only a faint chill pity, a faint chill scorn.

He said, "She shall be my friend!"

Side by side let us stand,

For I need your help and you.

Comrades true and true,

With my hand in your dear hand

We will see life out to the end".

*And she turned and her eyes met his; and I think
she cried*

*(But she laughed through her tears) and she came
to her place at his side.*

Thomas O'Meara

THE STORY OF EDAH

CHAPTER I.

THEY were seated at a small table in the spacious drawing room of one of Denver's hospitable homes. Their location was near the opening into the conservatory, and the soft splashing of the tiny fountain kept up a low accompaniment to the merry hum of voices, and the tinkle of china and silver. 'Twas one of the many functions given in honor of the wife of Colorado's new Governor.

The four at this particular table were old-time friends, and as course followed course, they kept up a running fire of small talk, commenting upon the guest of honor, her handsome costume, and the many other elaborate toilets on exhibition on this particular occasion.

The youngest of the quartette sat with a half smiling look on her eager young face, as her eyes wandered about the well filled room—thoroughly enjoying the light talk, the subdued hum of voices about her, the flower scented air, the splash of falling water in the conservatory nearby, and the soft far-away music of the hidden orchestra. It was evident that such scenes were not so familiar to her as to have lost their ability to charm.

Gradually their conversation took a more serious turn. A new novel, and an interesting article in a late magazine were discussed—and quite naturally

they came to speak of their club, all of them, as it chanced, being members of the same one.

They were speaking of the paper on Tolstoy read at their last meeting. One lady declared it to be, in her judgment, the best of the year, and turning to her young companion, said,

"I'm sorry you were not there to hear it, Edah!"

"Thank you. It is sweet to be remembered, to know one is missed," smiling at the speaker, an intimate friend of her aunt's, "but no one is half so sorry as I to miss not only the paper but the discussion, which I sometimes enjoy even more. Is it really true that Tolstoy does not believe in immortality?" turning to the friend on her right—the senior of the quartette by some years, a bright and shining light in the Club, and an authority in matters literary, historical, and philosophical, "for," she added, "I've just purchased 'My Religion,' but I shall not care to read it if he holds anything so contrary to plain Bible teaching."

"I fear," smiled her friend, "you will either have to give it away, or let it stand unopened on your library shelf, for he certainly does not believe in Heaven or a future life, as we understand immortality to be."

The third member of the party, a large stout woman, elaborately dressed, with an air about her of being at peace with the world and herself, remarked, "Edah, you should take up Christian Science. It is just what you need! You would quit worrying about the baby, and your mind would be at rest concerning such weighty matters as immortality, fore-ordination, predestination, and justification by faith," and her large body shook with inward laughter. Recovering, "really, you know, there is no such thing as sin, sickness, or death."

The lady at Edah's right, a thorough Calvinist,

rooted and grounded in the faith, and perfectly able to give any number of reasons for the belief that was in her, took up the challenge thrown out by the last speaker, and from that time on until the repast was ended, Edah listened to the discussion, which at times waxed warm for and against the new doctrine.

At the signal the guests arose from the tables, the four friends separated to speak with other acquaintances, and the noise of conversation and cheerful laughter broke out afresh.

Soon the adieux were said, and the waiting carriages and motors drove up to receive their fair owners. Edah and a friend passed out together, and walked down Fourteenth street. The short February afternoon was fast merging into twilight—the sun had already gone behind the snowy range, and the air was clear and sharp.

“Do look at that beautiful sight!” said Edah, lifting her eyes to the snow capped mountains, over which hung a rosy light. “I love those everlasting hills; they rest and calm me always. We make new religions, change or modify the old ones; states and governments arise and disappear—generations of men come and go, and through it all they stand fixed and immutable, always the same. Yes,” she added, “they make me feel so tranquil.”

“It is really beautiful, but why so solemn? I caught an occasional word of some deep religious discussion you were having at your table. That’s what comes of having so many old lady friends. We weren’t having any musty old debate at our table, I can assure you,” and she laughed gaily, adding more soberly, “but then, you always were given over to weighty matters, more or less.” Edah smiled and wished for the moment she could take things as easily as her light hearted companion.

They had turned north on Champa street, while

speaking, toward Edah's home. "If you are really interested to know, I will tell you why I am so solemn, as you say. That same discussion has rather upset me,—Calvinism versus Christian Science. The more I hear of the latter doctrine or belief, the more I am impressed."

"In what way, favorably?"

"No, far from it. A vague feeling of alarm takes possession of me. The old faith of my ancestors seems to be slipping away. If it was good enough for them to live and die by, why is it not good enough for us?"

"I'm a little surprised at you, Edah! Just stop and think how many religious sects there are in Christendom, all of which had their day of beginning, and this is only another of them. Even your own 'pet brand' only dates back to the Reformation."

"And I am surprised at you," said Edah. "Our 'pet brand' as you are pleased to call it, dates back to the days of St. Paul. But corrupt forms and errors had crept into the Church until at the time of the Reformation it was sadly in need of just such an overhauling as it received at that time. But look, isn't that a darling picture!" and all disquieting religious discussions took instant flight.

The sight the two women gazed upon certainly justified the exclamation.

Between the parted lace curtains of one of the front windows of an artistic little cottage, stood the baby figure of a little child, her round dimpled face looking all the fairer because of the pale blue dress she wore. Behind her, the room glowed with a soft light from the open grate.

"Edah Brown," said her friend, "I should think you would be the happiest person alive, with such a lovely little home, and darling baby. I'm half inclined to envy you," thoughtlessly forgetting her friend's widowed state.

"Don't do it," said Edah, "but instead come in with me awhile—I promise to share Anne's attractions and attentions with you, and will see that you get safely home later."

"Thank you my dear, not now—some other time. I am going out this evening, and must rest awhile before dinner."

The two friends parted—Edah lightly running up the front steps, smiling the while, and throwing kisses from her finger tips to the little one at the window. She entered the small parlor which was most tastefully furnished, laid aside her wraps and stood a moment by the warm fire before seating herself in a low rocker to take the child in her arms, all the while chatting merrily with baby, who was responding in her own fashion to the best of her ability.

"Katie," as she turned to the nurse, "has Anne had her supper?"

"She just finished as you came," replied Katie, who, with Edah's valuable assistance, was nurse, housemaid, and cook."

Since her husband's death, when their baby girl was scarcely a year old, she had lived alone with her nurse and child, in a very simple way. Aside from her literary club and an occasional luncheon, afternoon reception, or tea, Edah attended few social functions. She had many friends, for she had lived there from a child. Left an orphan at an early age, she had made her home with an aunt, whose family had moved to Denver from their Eastern home when Edah was seven years of age. So she had grown up in their midst—graduated from high school, and married the same year at the age of seventeen. Some said she might have done better—but then people have to say something.

He was many years Edah's senior. Traveling for a Chicago firm, he was away from home much of the

time. But she was happy in the home he provided for her, which her innate artistic taste had made very attractive.

She grieved sorely over her husband's death, which had occurred while away from home on one of his trips. She had been hastily summoned but before she could reach his bedside, pneumonia had done its worst.

She was young, therefore naturally light hearted, besides his long absences from home had helped to make it more easy for her to recover from her sincere and honest grief.

A beautiful picture they made in the rosy fire-light. The tall tawny-haired young mother with her clear skin and rich coloring, and the love light shining in her dark eyes. Nestling on her bosom the rounded form and golden hair of her fairy child.

The favorite stories had been told—the pink toes and fingers had been “said” several times, and baby's eyes were getting heavy.

The silver toned clock on the mantel chimed out the half hour.

“Come now, the clock says time for Anne to go to bed.”

“No, no, more 'tory, more 'tory.”

But with a promise of the chickie song, and a little diverting, she was carried unresisting off to bed.

After the little white robed body had been snugly “tucked in,” and the good-night kisses showered on neck and cheek, Edah seated herself by the bed, and in a low voice sang the lullaby she had always sung to the baby.

“Sleep, baby, sleep, the long shadows are falling,
And down in the garden the pretty white hen——
With a cluck and a cackle, she's sleepily calling

Her loved ones together, her little ones ten.
She broods soft above them, the downy wee things
That hide in the shade of her motherly wings.
And chickens and babies to slumberland creep
Sleep, baby, sleep; sleep, baby, sleep."

Once, twice, she sang it through, by that time baby was soundly sleeping. She arose quietly, and bending down, kissed the dimpled hand lying uncovered on the white counterpane—turned off the light and passed out, leaving the door open into the lighted hall, and descended the stairs.

After building up a bright fire she seated herself once more in front of it, and gazed abstractedly at the little blue jets of flame shooting up through the fresh coal. Her mind again reverted to the discussion of the afternoon, arousing once more some old lingering doubts that she hoped had been laid forever.

"If Calvinism were the only true rendering of the gospel teaching, why were there so many able and learned people who not only did not accept it—but actually read a different meaning into their Bibles?" She had often puzzled over the matter, for she knew "there were as profound thinkers in other denominations as in her own—and she must accord them the merit of being honest."

"And now here were numbers of her friends, taking up this new faith which was so plainly at variance with the teachings of scripture."

"No sin, no sickness, no death," how monstrous! yet there must be something to it, else her friends and so many others would not accept its teaching.

The longer she dwelt upon it, the more disturbed and unhappy she felt. She seemed to be slipping off the firm foundation of her old faith on to sinking sand. She would not, could not go without a struggle—and yet at the same time had a depressing feel-

ing that she was powerless to help herself. Something, she knew not what, was working within her soul.

Hearing Katie fixing the furnace for the night, she roused herself and determined to put such disquieting thoughts out of her mind, "till a more convenient season," and reaching for her Bible that had been her Rock of Defense, and her Refuge, in the past, sought comfort where she had found it so many times before.

Edah was religious both by birth and training. She could not remember the time when she was not in Sunday School, either as pupil or teacher.

Reverently turning the sacred pages, she chose the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, beginning so beautifully with "Comfort ye, Comfort ye, my people, saith your God." By the time she had finished, her soul was once more calm and serene.

She arose and looked after the doors and windows—a little formality she invariably went through after Katie had been the rounds, covered her fire, turned out the lights and went upstairs to bed.

Long and lovingly she gazed on the rosy features of her darling child, and as always, the last thing before closing her eyes for the night, she knelt by the little bed, and prayed that He who "watches over the sparrows," would keep them "under the shadow of his wing."

'Twas well for Edah, 'tis well for us, that future happenings are hidden from sight.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW short weeks had rolled away and it was near the close of March. The day was cold and gray—the sun had not been able to penetrate the cloudy veil which hung low over mountain and plain, and a bitter, dreary wind had been blowing since morning.

It was late in the afternoon when a carriage drove up and stopped in front of the attractive cottage on Champa street. Two ladies and a gentleman alighted and walked slowly up the steps. The tall lady in black involuntarily glanced toward the window, then hastily covered her eyes with her hands, as if she would shut out some unwelcome sight. She staggered and would have fallen had it not been for the protecting arm of the man at her side, who assisted her into the house.

The sight of a belated arrival of white carnations or their heavy perfume in the closed room overcame her and she sank back in her uncle's arms, and for a time at least, forgot her heart was breaking.

The trained nurse, who had not left the house, was ready for the not unexpected occurrence, and the poor bereft young mother was brought back to a dull consciousness of her desolation.

Seeing Katie with her swollen, tear-stained face, entering with a cup of tea on a tray, she threw herself down among the pillows of the Davenport upon which she had been sitting and burst into violent weeping.

There was not a dry eye present but all looked the relief they felt at sight of Edah's tears. Her silent, wide-eyed misery had been pitiful to behold.

"Oh!" she cried, "other—other—hands than—than mine—ca—cared for my darling. How—how could I—have done it! how—how could I!" choking with sobs while she wrung those delinquent hands in an agony of remorse. "In—in—the supreme moment—her mother—failed her!" the words ending almost in a shriek.

Her aunt tried in vain to comfort her. "Edah dear, you would never have forgiven yourself had you not done just what you did. Everything that was possible was done, so do not reproach yourself you poor dear child," trying to soothe by loving caress as well as with comforting words. But there was no comfort in sight for that anguished soul.

Miss Palmer came with a tablet, but she turned her head aside and put out a protesting hand. "Can't you see I've—I've—nothing left to live for? Let me die!"

But the nurse was persistent—she knew, they all knew, that the young do not die so easily—that in all probability she would live to suffer other sorrows than this ere that time should come. Miss Palmer whose experience was not small, finally succeeded in getting her patient to bed and had the satisfaction of seeing her medicine take effect in a fitful, uneasy sleep which gradually grew more natural as the hours passed. In the four days of her baby's illness no one knew if she had slept at all.

After the two had gone from the room Mrs. Van Alan, Edah's aunt, a short, stout, middle-aged lady said to her husband, "If only she had not insisted on coming back here! I'm very uneasy about her—Don't you think we would better send for Dr. Graham? he might be able to help her reach a

happier state of mind—she will certainly make herself sick if she goes on like this!”

“Well, my dear, do as you like. I think the nurse is going to handle the situation all right; besides he was here quite awhile this morning and his remarks this afternoon were very beautiful and comforting I thought.”

“Yes, yes, I know—but perhaps if he were to see her now—I’m sure I don’t know how to comfort the poor child,” and she wiped the tears from her own eyes.

When Miss Palmer returned to the living room a little later, with her finger to her lips and a reassuring nod to their questioning looks both felt a great relief; and before long quiet reigned in the little home, which for the past few days had been so full of activity and sounds of childish suffering.

It was small wonder that the poor young mother was prostrated with grief: she had so recently lived through the sorrow incident to the death of her husband, only to be overwhelmed and crushed by one greater wherein she was called upon to part with *all* that was left.

The child had been taken violently ill from the start with scarlet fever. Edah, frantic with grief at once called in a trained nurse realizing that the very little knowledge she possessed in caring for the sick, was not now available in her distracted frame of mind. Later, two nurses and two doctors fought every inch of contested ground, but—death won out.

Her uncle and aunt who were wintering in Florida had been summoned at once, but did not reach Denver in time to see little Anne, their pride and their darling, till after the baby spirit had taken its flight.

That night's troubled, restless sleep did not repair the havoc caused by her grief and shock—nor that of many following ones.

Miss Palmer stayed with her a couple of weeks—but hers was a sickness of heart and soul more than physical illness.

The cause of her most poignant suffering still seemed to be the thought that she had allowed others to nurse her baby when it was the very last time she herself could ever have the opportunity!

"I'm sure my baby wanted me," she reiterated over and over again. The thought was maddening but she could not get away from it.

Upon one of her aunt's visits, Miss Palmer suggested taking Mrs. Brown home with her, adding "I don't believe she will ever get well here. What she needs is a complete change of scene and surroundings."

"I doubt if she will come," remembering her niece's determination of character.

"I think she will, when I suggested it she did not offer any objections. Poor thing! she is limp as a rag every way. That idea of hers about not nursing her baby through its illness, amounts almost to an obsession with her!"

"It is so sweet of you not to mind, for really you know, she means no reflection upon yourself."

"I understand that fully—it is the result of a supersensitive conscience on her part. She has begged my pardon several times and really tries not to mention it."

The first fine day that came found Mrs. Van Alan's automobile in front of the little home, now grown so awful to Edah. The nurse assisted her patient down the steps and into the waiting car and took her place by her side and silently and swiftly they were wheeled

away from the material reminders of the sorrowful events of the past few weeks.

Edah never went back.

When Mrs. Van Alan became convinced Edah was determined in her resolve to sell the place, she offered to attend to the packing of her household effects.

"Thank you, aunt, you are so good to me—but you need not have that trouble for I'm going to sell everything but the things that belonged to my darling baby. All her belongings and the photographs you find, please put in Charlie's trunk, and it can be brought here and put in the attic!"

"I'm afraid you'll be sorry, my dear," objected her aunt: "they can be stored for a year or two and never give you any bother," she urged.

"No, I shall never want them again," said Edah mournfully but with decision.

The tasteful, harmonious furnishings helped sell the once loved home, and it was not long before strangers came and went from the house that had held so much for Edah of joy and happiness and later of tears and sorrow.

The raw chilly winds, dust storms and occasional snows of Denver's Spring had finally given place to June's delightful days.

Edah's friends had all been so kind and sympathetic, and her aunt had endeavored by all the means in her power, to turn her self-centered niece's mind to other things, but all to no purpose it seemed. It was only after much persuasion that she consented to accompany her aunt to Manitou.

She had always loved it there. The sparkling atmosphere of that delightful resort nestled at the foot of the great Peak, with the rugged mountain scenery all about, had been like wine to her young

blood, at the same time rousing the most reverent and deeply religious feelings within her. But the God of Nature called not now to her from out that splendid solitude.

In vain did her friends plan little excursions for her entertainment. The Garden of the Gods no longer had any charm—the Cave of the Winds had ceased to please and even the wild, rugged scenery of Cheyenne Canon no longer stirred an enthusiastic emotion.

Mrs. Van Alan, after weeks of futile endeavor, packed her trunks, took her niece and returned home—glad of its spacious rooms, rest and quiet and the good things to eat which her expensive cook knew so well how to fashion to suit her rather exacting taste.

'Twas late afternoon, one of those cool days in August which sometimes swoops down upon Denver from her neighboring mountain heights; the automobile was in front and Mrs. Van Alan waited impatiently for her companion, seeing without noting the splendid preparations the sun was making for a glorious descent behind those fixed and everlasting hills. Presently she heard her niece's step descending the stair and with slow, listless manner Edah emerged from the door-way and joined her aunt, looking pale and thin in her mourning. The bright, glad look in her beautiful brown eyes, revealing the loving, cheerful soul within, which had been her chief attraction, was now changed to one of apathy. Had it not been for her tall and graceful carriage and her indescribable hair, she would have appeared almost plain.

Together they moved on down the steps without speaking and took their places in the waiting car.

Away they sped over streets as smooth as the floor. The chauffeur knew Edah's favorite drives and

headed his car for the boulevard and country. He also divined by subtle instinct that she liked to "cut the air," as he expressed it, "at a gait that was worth while:" but that had to be accomplished rather warily, and at separated intervals, for Mrs. Van Alan's, "Banks, you must be driving more than eighteen miles an hour," caused a reduction of speed only to be gradually accelerated until again called down; all of which offered more amusement to Edah than the ride itself.

Mrs. Van Alan opened the low-toned conversation with the remark: "I do think, Edah, that you are growing selfish in your sorrow. Here your uncle and I have done everything we can think of to make life more endurable for you and you won't even make an effort to be cheerful! It is most depressing to have a person around who is so morbid and mournful all the while. Not that I would think of that," she went on hastily as she saw a faint color come into Edah's face, "but your conduct is really unbecoming that of a Christian. Others have had as great sorrow as yours—their loved ones have been taken away but they have not therefore wrapped themselves about with a mantle of grief and refused to see the Hand of the Lord in it all. As I said before, it is positively unchristian and if I were you I should really be *afraid* to act in that manner, if no higher motive prompted."

Suddenly her voice changed and she said in a tone of entreaty, "Now, Edah, dear, why don't you take up your music again, it will help fill in the time and gradually your old love for it will return?"

While her aunt was speaking, something which of late had been floating hazily around in her niece's mind seemed suddenly to crystalize; her eye lost its dull uninterested look, she straightened up her body as if a new resolve had seized her.

"Dear, Aunt," she said, impulsively clasping that

lady's hand, "I know I have seemed ungrateful but I did not mean it so, please forgive me," and the tears sprang to her eyes. "I have been so wretched that, as you say, I have not thought of others. As to the music—my heart is certainly not attuned to melody;—the very thought is hateful! But there is one thing," speaking very low, "that does appeal to me—I should like to learn how to take care of the sick." A spasm of pain crossed her face as she added, "it is, as the proverb says, like locking one's door after his treasure has been taken." Without giving her aunt an opportunity to speak, rightly judging that her remark would stir up opposition, she continued, "I should like to go into the children's ward of a large hospital, and begin at the beginning and learn it all. Don't you think uncle could arrange it for me?"

"Why, Edah Brown, you're certainly not in earnest!" exclaimed her dumfounded relative. "In the first place your health will not permit of such a thing—you look more as if you needed a nurse yourself. Then I believe that one can't pick her work when she goes into training; all sorts and conditions of men and women, and all sorts of diseases, is what you will have to face. Besides you don't need to take up anything for a livelihood—your house sold well, and the interest on that and your husband's life insurance will be quite a nice income; and you know our home is yours as long as you care to stay with us."

Mrs. Van Alan had visions of helping her niece make a second marriage which in all respects would be a more fitting and brilliant one than the first. It had all been so sudden. She had been caught unguarded—taken unawares—and the wedding was an accomplished fact and the happy couple gone on their way to honeymoon-land amid a shower of rice, old shoes and good wishes ere she had time to catch her breath.

She thought she understood her niece's character better now: she had made a fatal mistake in misjudging the gentle, affectionate, bidable young girl, and was completely surprised and outflanked when she had tried to stop proceedings.

Edah had shown a spirit of determination most unexpected. "Yes," she had profited by past experience. A nurse, indeed!"

"Thank you, you dear, good aunt. No home will ever seem so dear to me again, and I never, never can repay you and uncle for all you have been to me"—and her voice choked. After an effort at self-control "please don't be angry with me—but I feel I *must* do this thing."

The evening air was growing chilly. Mrs. Van Alan, although greatly vexed, had no intention of giving up her secretly cherished plans at the first signs of opposition.

"Drive home, Banks," and the ride was finished in silence.

Later on in the evening Edah laid the matter before her uncle, earnestly soliciting his help and co-operation. From the first he viewed the project favorably but no decision was reached—her aunt holding out obstinately against it.

It was only after several more conferences, in which Mrs. Van Alan remained bitterly opposed, that Edah finally decided to again act in opposition to her aunt's wishes, although it grieved her sorely to do so.

This offense was never fully forgiven.

After the matter was settled—and letters sent out to various hospitals in New York and Chicago—new life seemed to enter her veins. She went about her final preparations for leaving with an amount of energy and interest that quite surprised herself. She thought she had done with life and was only waiting for death, but—she was young, and had not taken that fact into consideration.

By some chance, probably a "pull" effected by her uncle—she was entered in a large private hospital on the south side of Chicago and was to report for duty October first. Edah was almost sorry the date was not earlier; but then there were things to be done—things which had been neglected these last months.

When not out of town she had been in her place in the Sabbath School and perfunctorily taught her class of little girls, which had been hers the past few years—ever since they left the primary. She had often visited them in their homes and they had enjoyed the hospitality of hers. She was fond of them individually and collectively and they returned her kindly feelings with interest.

Edah made an effort to find a successor to herself—some one who would be sincerely interested in them and keep them together until her return—"For," she pictured to herself, "here is where I'll come to practice my chosen profession"—"In Memoriam"—"for her dear sake," as she wiped away the tears.

Her last Sunday at home dawned beautifully bright but Edah's spirits were not in harmony with the day. It was much harder to leave than she had thought, besides she shrank from the untried and unknown life ahead of her.

She left home early to walk to the church, she would have that time in which to compose her agitated feelings and regain something of her normal state. The brisk walk through the fresh crisp air and sunshine did put new courage and hope within her and she got through the service hour and the good-bye of friends better than she had hoped.

As she left the gray stone church, she said in her heart a reverent farewell. Here she had come when scarcely more than a child to unite herself with the people of God, in the Church He had established. God had seemed very near to her there in times that

were past and she fervently prayed that the new church home which awaited her elsewhere would give her the same feelings of peace, tranquillity and worship that had blessed her in this dear old place.

But saying farewell to that sacred bit of ground in the cemetery was very hard. She had spent so many hours in that holy quiet spot and it would be so long before she might see it again.

People, those who mourned for loved ones laid in that peaceful retreat, and young, unthinking Sunday afternoon strollers looked with tender pity as they passed, at the black shrouded figure crouched low over a tiny mound in an attitude of absorbing grief.

When the shadows were lengthening, her uncle and aunt returned for her and a very unhappy and sorrowful niece was assisted into the machine. Her unseeing eyes did not take in the beauty of that September evening which seemed to have been made for her last impressions.

The summer had lingered unusually long and no killing frosts had changed its late beauty. The woodbine clung in its fervid gorgeousness to chapel walls and masonry. The dark green of the spruce and pines contrasted with the changing colors of the deciduous trees and the geraniums, petunias, fuchsias, and other gay blooming plants still brightened the shadowy sombreness of the place.

The broad valley stretching away—down and up to the foothills, was bathed in a rosy mist, while beyond was the towering mountain wall that blocked the way into the sunset, whose summit's uneven line was now sharply defined against the glowing west while purple shadows clustered at its feet.

'Twas Nature's impressive appeal to look beyond the little grassy mound—"Beyond the confines of the tomb," to Life—the Present and the Now.

CHAPTER III.

'Twas a cold rainy day the 30th of September when Edah stepped from the taxicab and walked up the broad entrance of the large building which was to be her home for the next three years. It looked so uninviting, positively forbidding, and she thought of her life there with sinking feelings.

The depressing weather had gotten onto her spirits, following the breaking away from home and the irrevocable plunge into new and untried conditions. But Edah had character and pluck and she resolutely shut out her timid fears and homesickness, feeling as she walked by the side of the nurse who acted as guide "that here at least she would be too busy to think of other things than present duties," and she entered the presence of the formidable head nurse with a proud carriage.

She was given a small private room, which had been one of the concessions obtained through the "pull," and a number of instructions as to her duties and dismissed until the following morning.

Edah found her work that first year seldom attractive—at times repulsive—but the lectures she enjoyed and was a very apt, eager learner.

She was not long in making the discovery that the nurses flirted dreadfully with the internes when occasion permitted, and that she herself was not an object of indifference to the house physician.

She was greatly appreciative of the many little kindnesses he showed her in a quiet, unobtrusive way, but which were in a measure offset by the actions of the head nurse, as well as several of the other nurses, who did not fancy her proud reserve. She evidently had come from a plane of life with which many of them were unacquainted. Edah had not intended to give the impression of aloofness, but her sorrow, for one thing, had walled her about—making it difficult for both them and herself.

The days and the weeks passed—full of work. The training was doing great things for her physically; the constant grieving could not be indulged in and the reflex action of the mind upon the body, coupled with the simple regularity of her life, worked wonders. She was beautiful with the glow of health, which makes for attraction even in the plainest person, which she certainly was not.

So passed the first year of mingled drudgery, distaste and activity.

One day early in the summer of her second year she received a letter from her aunt saying they would be there the following week, enroute to New York where they had taken passage for Europe, “to be gone an indefinite length of time.” The news was not a surprise, for Edah had been urgently invited to make one of the party when the matter was first talked of and the temptation had been strong: had it come the preceding year it would probably have been irresistible and her life so changed as to be wholly foreign to that in which her feet were now set.

The two days Edah spent with Mr. and Mrs. Van Alan were full of pleasure and real delight. Out into the great city with her foster father and mother and away from the rigid rules and regulations which were more than irksome at times to her free loving spirit: and the theater, which Edah had not allowed

herself for so many, many months was truly enchanting.

As the three were driving back to the hospital her uncle said, "your business interests will be as carefully looked after by Lawson as if I were there; and before I left we placed your unspent income to good advantage." If at any time you should need an extra large draft—in case of sickness or a change of heart as to Europe"—and he smiled into his niece's face, but Edah saw approval of her decision to stick to duty plainly written in his eyes—"Do not hesitate to make it, the funds are there."

"You are more than good to me, uncle, but I can't forecast any need for such—I do not look as if I were going to be ill do I?" gaily, "and I've quite settled that unstable heart of mine concerning Europe—although it would be nice," and she patted her aunt's gloved hand, and gave the tiniest bit of a sigh.

"You will write me nice long letters, telling me of all the thrilling things you and uncle are seeing and doing and it will be almost as nice as being with you, See?" and she affected to be very jolly over it. She laughed and chatted of funny incidents in her nursing experience so the words "Europe," "trip" might not again be mentioned; and she succeeded in conveying the idea that she was quite happy to be left behind and that hospital life was altogether delightful.

She got through with her adieux creditably, and threw a cheerful parting salute as she turned to watch them drive away, but as she came slowly up the steps the repressed tears would come and she did not notice the house physician standing outside the door in conversation with someone, until right upon them. She murmured an apology and bowed in acknowledgment of the doctor's greeting.

Going to her room, she threw herself on the bed and cried it out. "She hated the bare unattractive

place, full of the smell of disinfectants!" and she found nothing to charm in the diminutive room which was to be her home for another year and a half. "It was all positively hateful to her,—how had she ever stood it!"

"Why, why was I such a fool!"

But her aunt and uncle were even then at the station and their boat was leaving the next day after their arrival in New York—so there would have to be quick action on her part if she decided to reconsider at this the eleventh hour. But she knew way down inside of her that she did not intend to change her plans, and feeling somewhat the better for her little outburst, she arose, bathed her tear-stained face, donned her nurse's garb and decending the stairs reported for duty.

Seeing the house physician entering his office, she recalled the stranger who had been in conversation with him at the door. Although 'twas only a glance caught through tears, still there was no mistaking that splendid head which sat the broad shoulders so well. She had caught glimpses of him several times passing through the hall on his way in or out and she secretly admired him very much.

She judged he must be in some way financially connected with the institution—"a member of the board of directors perhaps." He was of medium height, but carried himself so that every inch counted for its full worth. She thought his eyes were blue and she knew he had light hair inclined to curl, but which was cut very close to obviate as much as possible any such tendency.

She was very curious to know who and what he was—all about him; "probably some married man for all she knew, and for all the difference it could possibly ever make to her, but to ask one of the nurses was not to be thought of," although she doubtless

could have been informed, for they managed to find out a great deal about any and every thing that touched their world.

Since the beginning of her second year Edah had been given several critical cases, in which she had really done most creditable work. Her heart was in it, especially when called to take care of children.

But at her first surgical case, in conjunction with a senior nurse, she so nearly fainted that she had to be dismissed. She was terribly mortified over the occurrence, mainly because she had been "found wanting" at the critical time, but also on account of sundry ill-concealed glances of ridicule and secret delight on the part of some of the other nurses and it was no imagination with Edah that Miss Ramsay entertained the same feeling. That individual left her out of future surgical cases till finally she ventured to entreat Dr. Wright to see what he could do about it.

"I really think I could get through it another time—if only given an opportunity," she pleaded.

There was a twinkle in his eye as he replied, "Well, I will see what I can do, but Miss Ramsay does not take kindly to any infringement of her prerogatives, you know."

"Thank you, Dr. Wright," laughing, "I'll try not disgrace you another time," as she moved away without giving him a chance to say more.

It was not so very long after that she was told she was to have a surgical case all her own. It was to be a minor operation—a child of five was to have his tonsils and adenoids removed the next morning.

Edah was herself this time—interested, eager, cheerful, faithful and untiring.

An outside surgeon performed the operation, but Dr. Wright with a number of the internes was present.

He was more than pleased with the cool, steady way in which her share of the work was done, and lingered a while to tell her so.

Edah was grateful but did not leave any opening for further talk.

As Dr. Wright passed down the hall he was still seeing the tall, beautiful brown-eyed nurse with the shifting colored hair as she moved about with deftness, quietness and precision—at the same time realizing that for some reason and in some respects he was almost as much of a stranger to her as at their first meeting.

The little patient was not long in the hospital but there had been time enough for the two to become fast friends, and Edah felt very forlorn without him and ill-prepared for the trying day that followed his discharge.

A child had died in the ward while she was on duty which upset her very much. The mercury had been soaring about in the nineties all day; now it was night and her small room was stifling. Sleep was out of the question—so after undressing she turned off the light and was sitting by the open window looking up into the starlit sky.

Since coming to the hospital she had seemed to put religion out of her life. There was no hostility—she had simply grown cold and careless—scarcely thought of those things which had been so much to her prior to her baby's death. Her busy, interested, active life, so new and different had shut out all else.

The stars which had always been her admiration and wondering awe might as well have been so many lamps set in the sky which only added to the oppressive heat.

But whether she wished it or no, the psychological moment had come—the combination was just right and she sat face to face with her soul! After an

hour's unsatisfactory communing, she knelt, the first time in months and tried to pray: but it was so hollow—the petitions seemed to fall back upon her heart,—hard, cold and meaningless. Almost too agitated to notice the heat she crept into bed and finally slept.

The weeks went by and the work went on but Edah was not again harassed over spiritual matters—nothing came up to disturb the deep waters of her soul, which were left untroubled.

“Do you know,” said Edah to Miss Hatfield, the one nurse to whom she seemed especially drawn—as they left the dining-room together, “I sometimes have strange doubts about some things connected with our training, but which are so vague I can scarcely formulate them, and if I could it would not be wise or practicable to give them much publicity here,” and she hesitated.

“Go on,” said her companion, “get it out of your system.”

Edah smiled a serious little smile. “You know of course we are learners here and implicit obedience to orders is demanded, and yet—yet—I can see wherein it might work a terrible wrong. When we go out from here we will be called upon, at least some of us will, to nurse under the directions of all kinds of physicians and surgeons—and you know there are plenty of fool doctors in the world! What if our training had given us a better grasp of certain cases than the physician in charge, what then?”

Miss Hatfield laughed uproariously. “Well, you are a queer one,” wiping her eyes—“Few cases you'll ever get if you let any doctor get the idea you think you know more than he does!”

Edah went on. “Did you hear of Miss Martin's telling Dr. Harper”—mentioning one of the internes—“That if he wanted to give that awfully sick typhoid patient in her ward any more pills he would have

to give them himself? It seems he prescribed a cathartic a few days before which had brought on dreadful hemorrhages and when he was about to repeat the order she simply gave him to understand he could give them himself, she wouldn't."

"I shouldn't like to be in her shoes," remarked Miss Hatfield with a shrug as they went their several ways.

Edah could not help musing about her companion's light way of looking at the matter. "I dare say all the nurses here reason like that; to get the business and what there is in it, was as far as they needed to go in thought or deed. Doubtless convictions *were* inconvenient things."

Just at this point Edah was summoned to Dr. Wright's office. She went with somewhat heightened color, for as she and Miss Hatfield were speaking, she had caught a glimpse of the same fine-looking man she had so often seen talking with the house surgeon, just before the door of the consulting room closed after him.

In answer to her light rap Dr. Wright opened the door in his most polite manner. He was always courteous and kind—to Edah as to all—but by intuition she knew that when those courtesies were extended to herself he wished her to understand them as having a deeper and more tender meaning; at all events she knew she stood high in the head doctor's esteem.

"Mrs. Brown let me make you acquainted with my friend Mr. Maxwell."

Edah bowed slightly—her brief glance had discerned a pair of rather small, deep blue scintillating eyes, "that could be merry and pleasant or stern and sharp," she thought later.

"Mr. Maxwell is here in the interest of his sister

whose child is ill and in need of the services of a nurse, how soon can you be ready to go?"

Edah's expressive eyes looked the gratitude she felt. She knew it was a delicate compliment in him to select her for that commission. All the nurses were glad to be sent out on "cases."

"In a very short time, Dr. Wright," as she turned to leave the room.

The strange gentleman spoke abruptly, glancing at his watch—"I'll wait here with the machine."

As Edah passed out the door she heard him explain—probably for her benefit—"My sister is very anxious."

Her heart kept time to the busy motions of hand and body as she rapidly made her preparations. "To think I am to have an outside case!" All her unusual excitement she attributed to that fact—would not acknowledge to her own proud heart that the handsome, secretly-admired man, so full of energy and decision had anything to do in the matter.

Her long, brown, nurse's wrap and bonnet of same shade were bewitchingly becoming—with those glowing cheeks which she had vainly tried to tone down by metaphorically "sitting hard" upon herself.

The door of the office stood ajar when Edah reappeared, suit-case in hand.

Both gentlemen were standing, and Mr. Maxwell seemed impatient over the wait; however, she saw him give the faintest start of surprise as he said, "I'll have my chauffeur carry out your bag."

Dr. Wright gave Edah a few words of advice and encouragement, meanwhile giving her a lingering handshake of farewell. "All too lingering," thought Edah, but she was too grateful to even appear to notice.

Mr. Maxwell handed Edah into his machine and seated himself by her side, snapping the door to as he

gave a short order to the chauffeur. The great touring car responded to the clutch and away they sped past the interminable buildings through the crisp October air, which gave Edah a good excuse for her brilliant coloring.

That ride was truly intoxicating! It had been so long since she had even been in a car—never in a more luxurious one—and her near proximity to this handsome stranger—yet not a stranger—thrilled her very being. Yet, accustomed to the ways of the world, she sat apparently as indifferent to her companion as if he had not existed, and not for worlds would she have broken the silence between them, although deeply anxious to know something of the patient—a child, she knew—toward whom she was hastening.

If he had been waiting for her to speak he concluded to do so no longer.

“For several nights my small niece has had symptoms of croup which would wear off during the day, only to reappear again with the night. My sister called in her physican at once, but he did not think it anything serious or alarming until early this morning when the symptoms became more aggravated: he has grave fears of bronchial pneumonia.”

Edah in a low tone asked her age.

“She is something past three, I believe.”

“And her name,” she barely whispered—inwardly fearing to hear him say “Anne.”

“Marjory—Marjory Bramhall,”—adding in a husky voice as he gave her a searching glance, “I hope you have had experience with the disease. Great God! it would nearly kill my sister to lose little Marjory, too,” reflecting aloud.

Edah bowed an assent and tried to look the assurance she did not feel.

The automobile stopped in front of a handsome home on the Lake Shore drive, and as they walked up to the

door Edah glanced at the windows thinking how much of misery they shut in that bright October day, and her sympathetic heart ached for the poor mother whose child's life might even then be hanging in the balance.

She was taken in charge by a maid and shown to her room on the third floor. As she laid aside wrap and bonnet she gave a cursory glance about the commodious room with its tasteful appointments; but her mind was filled with what lay before her. For the first time she fully realized what it was to feel there were those depending, relying upon her in this most critical time. "No organized, hospital system was there to help bear the burden of responsibility. Next to the doctor she felt that the issues of life and death rested in her hands." The awfulness of the thought forced an appealing cry heavenward for help and guidance and it did not return unto her void.

Calmed and strengthened she descended the stairs—pure, sweet, simple and girlish in her fresh nurse's costume of white with the absurd little undergraduate cap resting like a white-winged butterfly atop her gold-brown coil, and carrying her chart and silver-cased thermometer in her hand.

James Maxwell who was waiting to conduct her to the sick-room took in all these details at a glance and had she been looking for it she might have read approval written in his fastidious eyes. He introduced her to his sister, a small, young-looking woman with light, curly, fluffy hair, who had evidently been weeping.

She reached out a hand to Edah and said in a burst of tears, "Save my baby!"

The young woman, strong from her recent communion with heaven, gave it a firm, reassuring pressure and walked to the bedside, while the little mother cried heart-brokenly on her brother's shoulder.

Edah could hear his unsteady voice, but not the words, as he tried to comfort her.

The small sufferer, waxen white, with half-closed eyes lay propped up breathing with the greatest difficulty. The nurse took one of the little, hot, unresisting hands within her own and felt of the rapidly-beating pulse. Action was needed and at once; she turned to receive what instructions had been left by the doctor, who at that very moment entered and gave them in person.

It was a bitter fight—short, sharp and decisive but the black pirate lugger, manned by the death angel and his crew, flapped its dark and forbidding sail and glided away to other waters without this one particular little passenger.

Edah lived over once again her own heart-breaking sorrow. Sleep seemed to have forsaken her eyelids. A suppressed but restless energy had taken possession of her that was kept hidden under an outward semblance of calm. Only the deep smoldering look in her eyes betrayed its presence.

When, at the beginning of the second day's conflict, the doctor suggested an assisting nurse Edah begged so hard to go on with the case alone, she was finally allowed her own way.

"I will take little snatches of sleep when I can," she urged. She did not tell them she was doing it in order that the mother might help some and not suffer the agony of reproach that had been her portion these past bitter months.

After three days and nights of unceasing warfare, she knew the battle was won, and not till then did she stop to rest.

When assured the crisis was past, Mrs. Bramhall, with tears of joy in her eyes, grasped Edah's two hands in her own. "Never, never can I forget what you have been to us in this dark hour!" Gazing in

the direction of the now peacefully sleeping child, she added, "James and I will watch while you go to bed and take a long sleep—all day, yes—and all night too! We will waken you if anything should arise." She felt strangely drawn to the tall, calm young woman, who seemed to have some great reserve-force in her character, and who was so good looking and winsome withal.

The attending physician was loud in his praises of Mrs. Brown's all-round qualifications and made a mental note to keep that nurse in mind for future cases.

Mrs. Bramhall was sitting one afternoon near the end of Edah's second week with the nurse and now convalescent child: she had been urging Mrs. Brown to remain a while longer—"baby still needs careful watching you know."

Edah laughed—"she will be running about all over the house in two or three days: but I should like very much to stay if you wish it. Marjory and I are great friends, aren't we?" as that individual reached out a tiny hand for the paper elephant fresh from the hands and scissors of its maker.

"How clever you are with children—you ought to have a dozen!"

She was more than sorry for her thoughtless words as she noted a look of pain come into Edah's face.

After a short silence between them she said, "Mr. Bramhall wishes me to go with him to the theater to-night, what do you think of it?" That gentleman had been out of town and did not return till the baby was out of danger.

"A splendid plan! go by all means—Marjory is sleeping all right—she'll never know you are gone."

"I'm almost inclined to be jealous of you, don't you know—that child seems to have formed such an ardent attachment," and both ladies laughed.

These two young women sat and chatted together without restraint—on terms almost of intimacy. The mother overflowing with gratitude and the other allowing herself to be natural—free for the time from that proud reserve which had hedged her about so long.

Marjory was sitting on the bed playing with some toys and looking lovely, though still pale, in her light-blue kimono—her fair hair in clustering ringlets about her head. Edah was sitting by the bed helping unite the paper dolls with their more or less complicated clothing and thinking how very much the child resembled her uncle.

As if Mrs. Bramhall had read her thoughts she said, "Everyone thinks Marjory looks so much like my brother, but really I can't see it; or if there is a resemblance it is not nearly so strong as in the case of little Jamie—his namesake—who died a year ago at the age of five. Really, the likeness was most unusual—and he loved that child as few men love their own!" and she fell into a sad reverie while Edah's thoughts were busy with the past—"and I have no Marjory to help me forget."

A step in the hall followed by a light tap on the door—sounds that Edah so well knew—and found herself listening for,—made that lady with color heightening, hastily rise, as the door opened admitting Mr. Maxwell, and say to Mrs. Bramhall, "if you will remain with Marjory, I'll go for her supper."

The gentleman turned toward the bed—"What a comfortable little party we're having; cats, dolls, dogs and babies," with a glance at the menagerie surrounding them. "I came to join it, not to break it up!" looking in a half-amused way at Edah.

He had grown quite well acquainted with the baby's nurse, for he was a privileged character to come and go in the sick-room, after the crisis had been passed.

In fact before: he sometimes helped Edah with the vapor inhalations and on occasion with the oxygen—things his sister might have done but could not.

Yes, Edah's task would have been a harder one, but for his intelligent help.

His sister said quietly, noticing Edah's heightened color, "it is time for baby's supper, and thinking to herself, "how could Edah or any other sane woman be insensible to the personality of that thoroughly charming and altogether irresistible brother of hers?"

In her journey to the kitchen Edah communed with herself,—“Oh, I must get back to the hospital;—I must not stay the week longer, which Mrs. Bramhall insists upon!”

“But what reason can I give for not staying?” and the chicken broth came near being sugared instead of getting the wee bit of salt intended.

She wanted to get back to the sick-room, but did everything to prolong her absence. Not daring to wait longer she returned with the tray; and the brother and sister presently departed to dress for dinner.

James Maxwell was a strange mixture in his component parts; warm-hearted and affectionate beyond degree to those whom he loved, yet he could be as cold-blooded and merciless as any man with whom he came in contact, where his own interests were to be conserved.

At dinner that evening James Maxwell, editor, writer, and politician—was in his most entertaining mood—and his sister just adored him at such times. The little wine he had drunk seemed to have gotten into his blood with intoxicating effect. Anecdotes, clever stories, humorous incidents of his life political, succeeded one another in brilliant succession. When he made the effort he could charm his little audience as few men could, but this evening there was—plainly, to himself at least—no effort. He was

buoyantly carried along on the crest of some wave he did not stop to fathom.

As they were leaving the dining-room Mrs. Bramhall lovingly placed a hand through the arm of both husband and brother, looking like a girl in her evening costume with the dark troubled shadows of the recent past wiped out of her face.

"Now, Aimée, dear,"—her brother was saying, "have a pleasant evening, and do not worry about Marjory. I shall not be going out till late and I'll look in before I go to see that everything is all right;" adding, "or if you would rather, I'll remain at home—I can make the telephone do all that's absolutely necessary to-night."

"Oh, no! you dear, good brother, I would not think of having you do anything of the kind. I'm really not in the least uneasy, I have such perfect confidence in Mrs. Brown!"

They separated at the intersecting corridors and Mrs. Bramhall and her husband went in the direction of the invalid's room while the brother went the opposite way leading to his part of the house.

An "L" wing had been added on the north soon after the house had come into the possession of its present owners, for his exclusive use.

On the first floor was his office opening on the side street, while back of it was a small smoking and lounging den, which opened into his private hall, containing a door to the lower floor of his sister's part of the house, also one opening toward the street. His library, sleeping-room, dressing-room and bath occupied the second floor, which also connected with the corresponding floor of his sister's, while the third was fitted up into a large billiard and pool-room.

He entered his library and stood some minutes deeply engrossed in thought, his eyes fixed upon the floor. Then with hands in his pockets he began a

rapid, nervous walk back and forth the length of the room. The expression of his face seemed to denote hesitancy, uncertainty, as with bowed head he continued to walk.

At last the struggle was over—if one there had been—and with decisive look and action he went into the office, took up the telephone and was the self-contained man of the world again. After dispatching his business he glanced at his watch—"eight-thirty."

He re-entered his sister's part of the house and walked directly toward the sick-room. A light tap announced his entry.

Edah was sitting in the cosy, charming little boudoir connecting with Mrs. Bramhall's room which had been used for the sick-chamber.

She had been strangely restless all the evening—hoping and fearing alternately that he would come. "Oh, the bliss of a long evening with him—all to herself!"

She was young and lonesome and her heart was unattached; she argued with that member, "Only just once! I'm going back so soon—and—I'll probably not see him again, *ever!*" and then that organ would promptly stop beating for a while.

When the door opened upon him in full evening dress she was positively electrified! Some strange spell seemed upon her.

He came in with his easy, self-possessed manner and seeing with half a glance her agitation, walked into the other room and stood looking down at the sleeper, giving Edah a chance to "pull herself together," as he mentally put it.

With considerable effort that lady accomplished it, and when he returned she was her usual self, save for two red spots which burned high on either cheek and an unusual brightness of eyes.

James Maxwell had a book of poems in his hand—

he knew her fondness for poetry—and as he seated himself by the low table asked, “Are you too tired for a little Tennyson to-night?”

“I should like it above all things,” she said with a glad smile. He read in his low, deep, vibrant tones, that thrilled Edah through and through; occasionally closing the volume with his forefinger marking the place while he made discursive remarks upon the context or wandered off into other channels.

He made himself as agreeable and entertaining as possible—and he had considerable knowledge along that line—his experience had been large and varied. He was seven years her senior and many times that number her superior in worldly wisdom.

Presently his tone took on a more personal note, and before Edah knew how it came about she was telling him the story of her life. He was genuinely interested;—moreover he loved to look into those expressive eyes and watch the droop to that ravishing mouth when once again the details of those sorrowful times were lived through.

Even that pitiful recital never for a moment swerved him from his purpose.

When his Machiavelian judgment told him the time was ready, he arose from his chair and proposed a walk. “You have been shut up in the house all day—the moonlight is glorious,” and coming close to her side “you need the air!”

Edah instinctively looked in the direction of her charge.

“She is all right—besides we shan’t be gone long,” he murmured with his face very close to hers.

At intervals during the evening she had tried to throw off the spell of—she knew not what—of something that was possessing her—drawing her towards this man against all her reason and judgment;—but each time it would return stronger than before.

Their lips met in a lingering kiss and she was clasped in a close embrace.

Her scruples were over! Right and wrong, God's laws and man's were in a complete jumble in Edah's mind and all were absolutely worthless.

"Is your wrap downstairs," he whispered? casting his eye about the room.

"No," in a low tone, "I'll fetch it."

As she started to leave the room, "I'll meet you in my library. Do you know the way?"

Edah bowed an assent. "How often she had longed to penetrate beyond that door—to enter that sacred and forbidden realm, 'where *he* came and went and where everything spoke of *him!*' Now she was actually going inside the enchanted place!"

She ran lightly up the stairs to her room and returned enveloped in her long nurse's cloak.

He was not waiting for her in the hall—but she was not expecting him to be.

Softly, noiselessly, with wingéd feet she sped in the direction given.

The door stood somewhat ajar and she entered; as she did so, someone standing within shut it and Edah heard the spring-lock click into place. Again she was clasped close to his breast and showered with burning kisses on brow, cheek and lips.

* * * * *

The walk which had been contemplated with such eager expectancy was taken—but by Edah alone—when some time later, the door of the office was opened and, as she furtively glanced about her, she heard that door also shut and the spring-lock click, only in this case everything—everything in life that was worth while—was locked behind her.

The sky was full of clouds overcasting the moon—

Luna must have known—and was glad to hide her face away shutting out the pitiful, pitiful sight of the shameful unfairness. On the woman's more delicate shoulders has forever rested the unequal burden.

But this particular woman was not thinking of that. In her thoughts there were no comparisons—she had no room for them. She was polluted in her own eyes!— She was self-condemned!

She sped on and on in an endeavor to get away from herself.

Finally crossing over to the Lake she stood gazing down horror-eyed into its cold depths. “ ’Twould not be hard to throw her miserable self into those dark waters,” that had closed over many another whose burden had been greater than she could bear. But her religious nature held her back,—therein lay no escape for her.

She sat down with her face in her hands, mutely, dumbly suffering—the power of thinking seemed to have left her.

How long she sat she did not know; a chill shook her body and she rose to go—“ where?” she scarcely knew.

It was very dark, only the bright lights along the street were shining and she felt a drop of rain.

She hurriedly passed back over the way she had come, frightened at the dark—at herself—at everything.

She came within sight of the house, which was still brightly lighted, only the “ L ” was dark—and the awful nightmare gripped her once more.

She passed and re-passed the front door several times before she could get courage to enter.

A merciful numbness seemed to take hold of her brain and she went up the steps somehow and rang the bell. The butler, still on duty, let her in. He had a knowing, supercilious look on his face, which

Edah did not notice, but which soon gave way to one of pity as he looked at her poor, white, pinched face.

Still without feeling—in a dumb sort of way—she mounted the stairs to the sick-room. The door was partly ajar, and before she was herself seen, she had noted that Mrs. Bramhall was sitting—still in evening dress, her opera cloak lying in a heap on the floor, evidently where it had hastily been thrown—with the little invalid in her arms.

As she entered Mrs. Bramhall gave her a withering look and rising, carefully laid the sleeping child in the bed. She motioned Mr. Bramhall from the room and nodding to Edah to follow, led the way into the little boudoir.

The sight of the familiar room brought back a sickening recollection of the events of the earlier part of the evening which seemed to Edah ages ago.

After closing the door she turned to Edah, who stood silent before her as if petrified—waiting for the condemnation that was coming.

In cutting tones Mrs. Bramhall said, “Is this your idea of duty? Is this the way you keep a trust? May I inquire where you have been till this time of night?” Edah glanced at the little French clock which said half-past one.

Receiving no answer she continued, “When I returned my darling baby was standing screaming, in the middle of the floor; if she should have a relapse and die, you will have been her murderer!” adding scornfully, “but what would you care! anyone who will do what you have done this night will not care for anything! Go!”

Mrs. Bramhall stood like an outraged fury;—the atrocity of the deed had been beyond her comprehension:—at that moment she looked upon Edah in the light of a murderess.

Edah slowly walked out of her presence,—“or did she walk?” she thought later—“however did she reach her room?”

But there she was pacing back and forth with hands clasped across her brow. Her dereliction to duty, which before had been crowded out of her thoughts, now stung and lashed her almost to madness. “How could I have done it!” “Where was my religion—where my integrity of character?”—“Had she ever had any?”—“Was the past all a lie, or was this a hideous dream?”

Exhausted she threw herself across the bed and lay with wide, burning eyes.

The hours passed.

At last the dark rainy night showed signs of returning day and with it she was roused to a need for action.

Her things were hurriedly put in her suit-case, and with veil closely drawn over the pale face, she went down the stairs in the early dawn.

The halls were deserted and quiet;—only she, the sinner, was sleepless and abroad at that hour. As she passed *his* door a fleeting thought went through her mind “could he sleep?”

Her face and neck burned for an instant—then faded again to paleness.

She listened a moment for sounds from the sick-room—but all was quiet. She hoped “it was well with the child” and felt glad for a moment, but that too passed like an evanescent moonbeam obscured by a cloud.

She reached the door and passed out into the cold, wet, early morning—a young woman with a blighted life!

Weak, weary and really ill, she walked to the nearest car-line—carrying her heavy suit-case—vaguely feeling what she would have to encounter when reach-

ing the hospital, and she put a hand over her eyes as if to shut out the mocking, supercilious and gloating looks that would meet her on every side.

In her remorseful and heartbreaking reflections she had not once thought of acting as if she were not guilty—of putting on a bold and brazen exterior and letting the burden of proof come from the world;—for after all “what did the world really know?” No! *she* knew she was guilty, and her own innocence and self-respect were what she most prized, in the last analysis: “but the other, too, would be, oh, so hard to bear!”

She entered the large front door and glanced hastily around—the house physician’s office was closed—only the night porter was seen on that floor.

Ascending the stairs she saw one or two nurses passing in and out bent on their work—probably glad that their night’s vigil was over.

“How she envied them!”

With an involuntary groan she mounted the last stairs, opened the door to her little room, set down the heavy suit-case and removing bonnet and veil threw herself upon the bed.

Nature mercifully sets a limit to human endurance.

Unable to think she lay staring at the white wall, in a blank way, and before long she was sleeping.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning following that never to be forgotten night—at least by Edah—James Maxwell entered the breakfast-room in his brisk, energetic way—fresh from a cold tub, correctly attired in his well-fitting business-suit, and clean shaven, with the exception of upper lip on which flourished a luxuriant blonde moustache, the pride of its owner's heart.

"Hello, Cis! This is quite unexpected and equally delightful. You must have overslept, yourself! It did you good to have an evening out again. Where's Addison?" glancing at the unoccupied place at the table, as he shook out his napkin.

He was on the alert for signs and indications, and his sister's barometric countenance, always easy to read, reflected considerable internal pressure.

"Addison's eaten and gone long ago, and I don't see how I can look well after all I went through last night." And she was rather more than half inclined to be vexed at her brother's lack of perspicacity.

"Well, Cis, out with it,—it'll do you good!" regarding her with an amused smile. To do that gentleman justice, he really was not quite feeling the part.

"It's no laughing matter, I can assure you—I have been up all night!"

And then she told him how, upon their return from the theater, they had found the child standing in the middle of the floor, in her night clothes—"cold as

she could be and crying as if frightened almost to death!"

With genuine surprise, and a nonchalance that reflected credit in its way—"Where was Mrs. Brown?"

"That's what I would like to know—and what I asked her when she walked into the room where I sat with Marjory in my lap,—asleep by this time—looking like a lost spirit!"

Those last words entered his innermost consciousness and echoed and re-echoed through the recesses of his being for many a long day.

"If I had not been so terribly angry, I think I could have found it in my heart to be sorry for her. But think what if that dear child should have suffered a relapse!" And Mrs. Bramhall was so filled with the contemplation of such a direful happening that she lapsed into silence and continued her breakfast.

"I fear I'm somewhat to blame, for I promised to have an eye on things. I did go in as I told you I would, found everything all right, chatted a few minutes with Mrs. Brown and went back to the office, worked until about eleven, then retired. What explanations did the nurse make?"

"She never opened her lips. She just stood there like one transfixed looking down on Marjory. I put the baby on the bed, motioned her into the other room and gave her another chance to speak, but as she said nothing I dismissed her.

"When Maggie came down this morning, I told her to go to Mrs. Brown's room and waken her; she came back looking rather queer and said she was not there."

"Now, James, dear," as that gentleman arose from the table, "I want you to do me a little favor. Will you kindly telephone Dr. Wright to send me another nurse right away?"

"I would, Cis," pulling out his watch, "but I'm going out of town this morning and am late. Marjory's all right now?"

"Yes, she doesn't seem any the worse but it is almost a mir——"

"I should think with Maggie's help you would not need another nurse"—moving toward the door—"besides Mrs. Brown may return."

"Oh, no! Maggie says she took all her things."

"Well, Aimée, I'm sorry I can't help you out, but don't worry—things are going to be all right!" and kissing his sister's forehead he hurried off.

That day James Maxwell did not give himself a moment's time to think of aught else other than business, nor the next day either, nor the one following. He worked with an intensity early and late, and slept from exhaustion the few hours he allowed himself. He would give no chance for a pair of haunting brown eyes to reproach him.

How long Edah had slept she did not know, but she was roused by someone opening her door. She bounded up into a sitting posture with such suddenness that she involuntarily clasped her head in her hands, "to keep it from bursting," she thought.

"Goodness! you look like a ghost! Did I frighten you like that? I thought you must be dead not to hear my knocking—in fact you do look as if you'd just been dug up! Whatever's the matter?" and Miss Hatfield went on in her voluble way; "Miss Martin said she saw you come in early, but I've been so beastly busy I've not had a minute's time to make any inquiries until just now I asked Miss Ramsay what you were doing; when she said you had not reported for duty, I rushed off up here.

"I'm dying to hear all about it, but suppose I'll

have to wait until you look less like a corpse. Is there anything you'd like?"

Edah had lain her head back on the pillow. "Yes, I think if you would bring me some tea and crackers I would feel better," and with an effort gave her friend a little wan, flickering smile.

"All right; and I would suggest you get into bed in the proper way, and be sick like 'folks'—shall I help you?"

"You are ever so kind, but I don't need any help. I'll be all ready when you return."

Miss Hatfield hastened away on her errand. She was the one nurse who had been able to penetrate the barrier of reserve surrounding Edah. She was kind, warm-hearted and affectionate—a natural born nurse—but one who found the lecture part of her training very difficult. As she once said to Edah, who lent her all the assistance possible—"I wasn't born long on notes."

However, she was possessed of a deep sense of gratitude and was always on the lookout to repay Edah's oft-repeated kindness.

The hot tea did help some—and she lay trying hard not to think—"that head must get better so she could plan—for immediate action was necessary."

"I can never, never meet him again!" she moaned to herself; and once more the hot waves surged over brow, cheek and neck."

She put a wet cloth on her aching head and wished she had some chloral hydrate,—in lieu of which she put some cracked ice Miss Hatfield had brought into a handkerchief and placed over her burning eyes and fell to saying the multiplication table over and over again,—then once more oblivion.

She wakened at the usual time next morning—great is youth and health—put on her hospital uniform and descended to breakfast, looking very pale and feeling

miserably weak. It was a terrible ordeal, but she steeled herself to appear natural.

For some strange and inexplicable reason,—which Edah's fine sensibilities, super-keen now, detected at once in the atmosphere—the barrier of reserve which unconsciously existed between herself and the others had melted away. That wall which she had hoped would protect her from the possible avalanche!

Now she knew it was coming, and she braced herself to meet it.

The laughing, talking, chaffing nurses were upon her. They felt their "innings" had come! Not one among them, save Miss Hatfield, doubted but that she had been dismissed from the case. They plied her with innumerable questions.

One wanted to know "if the metropolitan Adonis had taken her out often in his machine?"

"Good of him to bring you home at daylight," said a second—which caused a general laugh and some knowing winks.

Another, "Did he make love in the most approved modern style?"

A fourth, sotto voce, "he must have been frozen stiff if he did."

Miss Martin spoke up, "Mrs. Brown wouldn't know if some one *were* making love to her! I don't believe she would know a love-letter from a death-warrant!" At which, of course, there was a general outburst of hilarious laughter.

The victim sat through the fusilade making an effort to eat. It was quite foreign to her serious nature to "chaff" back or give the quick retort. When she entered the room she had felt like prostrating herself before them and confessing all! But that feeling had given place to one of almost vindictive hatred by the time the terrible meal was ended.

The little she had forced herself to eat was nau-

seating her—and on either pale cheek burned a spot of crimson. With her proudest carriage and haughtiest reserve she left the dining-hall and sought the house physician's private office.

Why she did so at that early hour she could not have told; office hours, rules and regulations had gone quite out of her mind. She was only conscious of one thing—to get through the last little preliminary to her leaving that hateful place. But that gentleman was within—he was expecting this visit.

In response to the physician's "come" Edah opened the door and stepped inside, closing it after her.

Dr. Wright was positively shocked at her appearance. "Mrs. Brown you are ill," offering her a chair. "I insist upon your going to your room and to bed at once. I'll fix you up something to take," reaching for a prescription blank.

"Never mind about it now, Dr. Wright, I have come on a matter of business which must be attended to first," sinking into the proffered chair.

"Business can wait! One's health comes before everything else! You are not fit to be up!" with considerable anxiety in his voice.

"That's part of the business, Dr. Wright. I came to tell you I'm sick and am leaving to-day for home."

He was taken quite unawares, thrown off his guard;—"I have been expecting you to send for me. I knew you came home ill yesterday—Mrs. Bramhall asked me to send a nurse in your place."

Walking up and down the room he paused in front of her to say—"You should have let me know! Was that treating me right?" and there and then, with his honest, pale-blue eyes shining full of love he asked her to be his wife. "If not for my sake," he wound up, as no answering look met his, "then for the sake of my little motherless girl."

With quick instinct she wondered if he suspected anything and was thus giving her a chance to save herself!

"Oh, the tender generosity of it!" She bowed her head and winked hard to keep back the tears. She was glad she had not lost the power of feeling—for she thought she had turned to stone.

Presently she lifted her head and gave him a look of gratitude he remembered long—even if it was not one of love which his heart craved.

"Dr. Wright, I thank you more than words can tell, but I cannot give you my love, so for your sake as well as mine, it will be impossible for me to accept your offer."

She had risen as she was speaking, "But please forgive me if I give you pain," and she stretched out both her firm, white hands, which were warmly clasped in his. "Believe me, 'tis an honor I'll never forget. Good-bye," she said unsteadily, turning to go.

"Mrs. Brown," with a tightening clasp, "surely you do not mean to leave until you feel better! Wait a few days, there certainly can be no need for such haste."

His pained solicitude made her waver a little, besides she was feeling almost too ill to be up—but the picture of another meal in the hospital rose in horror before her mind's eye and she hesitated no longer.

"I really must go, I'm needed at home," surprising herself at the ease with which she framed the lie.

One sin prepares the way for another.

He longed to take her in his arms and bear all her burdens of whatever nature, from that time on till the end of life.

Something within his innermost consciousness told him James Maxwell was in some way connected with this sudden resolve. There was nothing left for him

to do, however, but give a final pressure to those dear hands and open the door for her to pass out.

Two or three weeks after this visit of Edah's to Dr. Wright's office, James Maxwell, urged by a variety of emotions—chief among which was a strong desire to obtain if possible, a chance glimpse of Edah in passing through the halls,—made a visit to his old-time friend.

There was no mistaking the chilling frost in the atmosphere of Dr. Wright's vicinity.

After a brief call he departed without having either seen or heard anything of her whom he had come to seek.

CHAPTER V.

THE early morning was pitch black, save for the light of the brilliant star gems in their setting of sable, when the long, through train came to an impatient stop to let off a single passenger—ostensibly at the small station—but in reality away down the tracks beyond the reach of platform. No—there were two. The tall woman in black had a sleeping child in her arms.

The porter carried out bags and bundles, leaving all huddled together in the dark and the sand, while he scrambled back to his car, hoping to get another nap before daylight, and the train glided away to the far distant city.

“Have a hack, ma’am?”

The question was repeated by the several drivers of the waiting vehicles, as they proffered their assistance.

The lady nodded to one, and soon bag, bundles, child and woman were being jogged along through the narrow streets of Biloxi—which the lady thought must be alleys—to the main hotel.

The November air had a penetrating chill, and she anxiously covered the sleeping child more closely. In spite of precautions the hateful paroxysm of coughing set in and the driver, much alarmed, wondered, “would it ever get it’s breath.”

"Shall I take you to the doctor's, ma'am, there's one not far away."

"No," in a low tone, "drive faster—I must get him in out of this chilly night air!"

The ever ready whip was applied and in a few moments they were at the hotel.

The coughing had ceased, and soon mother and child were sitting before a brightly blazing open fire.

While waiting for the room to warm, she sat with him in her lap. "Well, Robert, you and mothey are in Biloxi at last!" removing his outside wraps and knitted cap as she spoke.

The child looked about at the unaccustomed surroundings and was tremendously taken with the dancing firelight spread out before him which was something quite new and strange and altogether fascinating.

"It is going to be so nice"—running her fingers through his curly hair, a procedure usually productive of drowsiness—"and you're going to get well and strong and we'll have fine times playing together, you and mothey, in the sand and in the woods!"

Smiling down into his face, "perhaps we'll see some 'squirrelies' like those in your little book and we may find a little dog, all for your very own!"

Seeing the winks getting long—"now Robert dear, you sit in the chair while mothey gets you a nice, warm drink of milk, and keep those little eyes open just a few minutes."

She set her spirit lamp going, unfastened the huge roll done up in the straps, spread the large, warm, double blanket-shawl on the bed, took the milk from the thermos bottle and put it on to heat.

She was deft and quick and soon had the sleepy child back on her lap, drinking the good warm milk. With his curly head against her heart, she watched the tired eyelids close and the breathing come and

go in long, regular cadences. With pain, she noted the pale, thin face and the blue shadows lurking where the glow of health was wont to be.

Laying him within the folds of the shawl, she gathered the scattered things in order, and prepared to sleep some herself—knowing it to be the only way to keep in condition for that vital work—the work of saving the life of her dear child who was all the world to her, not in a relative sense, but absolutely.

She put on her warm, loose double-gown and sat a few minutes before the open fire, which she had replenished with a knot of that wonderful wood, which she afterward heard the darkies call “light-wood” and which blazed immediately in such a cheerful way.

No need for a smiling face now for Robert’s dear sake—and her features fell into a sad repose.

The light from the fire as it fell upon her showed plainly that the soul anguish of those four years had left its mark. The eyes wore a hard and defiant look, where only light-hearted kindness and innocence shone in other days.

After Robert’s advent it had not been quite so bad—there was something in life to live for. Yet at times the thought of the wrong done *him* was an added grief—still she did not always think of that, but gave herself up to her love for him with the full intensity of her mother nature, and she nursed his illness and watched his fading strength with the dagger of despair rending her heart.

Presently she arose and standing a moment by the bedside of the sleeping child, crossed the room to the other bed—and as the shadows of night were being scattered by the dawn she, too, slept.

* * * * *

After leaving the hospital four years ago in such

grief and agony of self-reproach, Edah went to a down-town hotel. While much preferring to leave at once—all had been done so hurriedly, so unexpectedly—it was necessary to await the arrival of funds from Denver; besides she was absolutely ill in body as well as soul. She came and went with anxiety and trepidation for fear she should meet *him* in corridor, office or dining-room.

She wished to die but was afraid—like that night at the Lake. “How could she meet her Maker?” “Perhaps her religion had failed her at the crucial time because she had been so rebellious when her baby died!” “and her doubts too——!”

There was no comfort for her wherever she turned—only and always the fear to die.

Closely veiled, and wearing her nurse’s costume, she boarded a New York Central train one fine, bright afternoon the latter part of October, a week after leaving the hospital, and was whirled away forever from the scene of her life’s tragedy;—still fearful she might see *him*, till Chicago had been left many miles behind.

She bought a magazine, but left it lying unopened in her lap, while she looked idly out of the window. The wonderful hand-painting of the God of Autumn on Nature’s canvas failed to elicit admiration or appreciation,—her unseeing eyes were turned inward. Over and over again with burning face she reviewed the situation winding up, as always, “how could I have done it!”

Vain reasoning; the sin and the shame were there to be her portion forever and she so young, not yet twenty-three!

She opened the book in her lap, desultorily turning its leaves—presently something caught and fixed her aimless eye—“we can suffer, may even die, but we must do right.” It gripped her attention—she read

it a second time and a third. One moment it utterly condemned and the next offered a flickering ray of hope.

Her eyes wandered again to the landscape—"had she sinned away her day of grace?" and there floated into her mind the lines of an old hymn——

"While the lamp of life holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return."

"I'm the blackest of sinners but—I'm not yet dead:"
"and I can suffer—on and on—till death releases me; perhaps"—the drooping mouth quivered, "perhaps I may yet do right," and two tears rolled down her cheeks in the gathering twilight.

She slept better that night than since those hours of oblivion from exhaustion upon her return to the hospital.

Through the coming days of darkness approaching despair, those words of the magazine article returned again and again to mock or give brief glimpses of hope.

After entering the large station in the great metropolis she made a few inquiries regarding the different suburbs, chiding herself at the same time, "one place is as good as another in which to lose one's self: the great city perhaps being the best."

But the desire to get away—out where she could breathe—was too strong to be resisted so she rechecked her baggage and took the first train for Yonkers.

Immediately upon getting settled she began making inquiries for work—she feared for the stability of her reason did she not get busy.

She was perfectly aware she would be looked upon in the light of an anomaly: "a young and good-look-

ing nurse out of work and living in a manner betokening competence!"

Before she had time to even think of applying to the doctors, which would have necessitated the answering of uncomfortable questions, probably with lies, a case occurred right in the boarding-house.

An elderly lady, a semi-invalid was taken suddenly quite ill during the night. Edah was called and took hold with such efficiency she was retained during the severe attack of la grippe which followed.

Her patient was difficult—fussy—and hard to manage but it was just what she needed; something requiring all her waking thoughts.

It was at this time Edah found to be a fact what before she had only feared! "Her sin was never to be lived down!" "It would only be augmented with time!" "It meant still more suffering!"

And hideous demons tormented her with a great temptation,—“you know the way out, do not hesitate,”—“why bring a helpless, innocent being into the world only to suffer blight?”

The turbulent waters seethed and roared but did not overwhelm. Out of the storm the words, “We can suffer, may even die but we *must do right*,” re-echoed through her being and proved a haven of refuge in that tempestuous sea.

Silent and pale but gentle and patient she worked over the invalid, conquering the wild desire to fly away—whither she did not know or care—till the influenza passed and the invalid had regained her indifferent health.

Then Edah was most earnestly and persistently urged by both her patient and married daughter, to accompany the former to the south of France for the winter—returning in the spring.

Edah really considered the matter, but when she reflected upon the “possibility of meeting friends—

perhaps *him*—either going or returning it was not to be thought of; besides Europe was getting to be a very poor place in which to hide.”

To the amazement of the ladies she declined what to them seemed a most flattering and attractive offer, one which few nurses would have turned down. “But she was queer,” they thought, “and very distant and hard to become acquainted with.”

Soon after, Edah left the boarding-house as suddenly as she had come, and lived a while in a rather retired hotel in the city, making short excursions into the country, answering all sorts of advertisements for board, which were not so plentiful at that season of the year.

At last she stumbled upon something in a small remote place up toward the Adirondacks. Not in a village but quite out in the country—in the small home of an elderly couple of German extraction, whose children were married and gone.

There she lived the months of preparation and waiting. Hours were spent in walking, ever walking—through the short winter days—in the cold and over frozen roads with the snow piled high on either side and stretching away in an endless sea of white.

Her evenings by the light of a shaded kerosene lamp were occupied in making the most elaborate and intricately embroidered garments for her baby: “not that it mattered but she must be busy!”

Soon after the new year was fairly launched she received an envelope bordered with black forwarded from Denver—the only way in which she received the few foreign letters which her apparent coldness and neglect had made infrequent. It was from her aunt’s husband, telling of the death of his wife in southern France. She shivered at the words—“perhaps they might have met!”

Then old-time recollections and memories held sway

and she mourned sincerely and deeply for her aunt, who had been the only mother she could ever remember, and for the dear departed days of her innocent youth. Yet she was, "glad she had gone before she knew the dreadful truth!"

She did not confide in the hard-working, German woman—there are some things that need no explanation—and the good-hearted woman called her *Mrs. Brown* but she had her own doubts.

Sometimes, in the solitude of her own room, she would let her sewing fall into her lap, and cover her crimson face with both hands—"if I only could hate him!" Sometimes she thought she did: then visions of his many helpful acts in the sick-room—his tender and loving solicitude for sister and niece—and the memory of his strong personality as he sat by the small table and read to her that memorable night—lifting eyes that were deep and dark with feeling, as he paused to quote a kindred passage or explain some hidden meaning,—and she knew that she *did not*.

Again she would wonder, "Why, if God were just, was the world so lenient with one-half of creation's sinners and so hard on the other?"

"Did *he* suffer the pangs of remorse and the sorrows of a trailing, bedraggled and outraged religious conviction?"

She felt herself to be a Pariah!—an outcast! forever doomed to loneliness and isolation.

So the cycle of soul anguish went on, and the long winter literally melted into spring.

After the snow was gone she went more often across country—noting the changes the season was bringing but not till well on into June did she speak of returning to the city.

One late afternoon she returned, hat in hand, from what she knew to be her last walk through the fields. The glancing rays of the sun set on fire the loose coil

of hair and intensified the lurking shadows of brown underneath. She smiled into Mrs. Schmidt's admiring face, as that lady appeared at the door.

"I shall be leaving in a few days and I want to tell you how good you've been to me, and how much I"—but she could not say more—something was clutching at her throat. She realized what it was she was leaving;—the shelter of this little home, the only one she had—and the kindly solicitude of the one person in all the world most nearly entitled to be called friend—"to go where?"

She caught the two hard-working hands in her own and gave them a warm clasp—passed into her room and began preparations for leaving.

The complete and elaborate layette was finished and had been admired by Mrs. Schmidt, who in all her life had never seen anything in that line half so soft, so fine, so beautiful.

That evening Edah wrote to one of the great lying-in hospitals in the city, making arrangements herself for her own "accouchement." "No loving husband or dear friends to do that for her!" "No one to care if she lived or died in that dread ordeal!" and she bowed her head on the table and sat motionless a long time.

Then the words—"We can *suffer*—may even *die*—but we *must do right!*" slowly shaped themselves in her mind and she felt comforted. "For had she not been trying since——?"

* * * * *

After the short, sharp, physical agony was over—when her baby lay warm and softly breathing on her arm she could only snuggle it close to her heart—while from her closed eyes the tears trickled down on the pillow—as if she would shield it forever from the far-

reaching effects of the "sins of the fathers"—and mothers.

Presently wiping the tears from her eyes she took a peep into the small bundle. She saw a "miniature reproduction of *him!*" to remind her always of her sin and wrong-doing.

The nurse came and took the baby away, wondering, "what sort of a woman she was, anyhow, who could care so much for her baby under such circumstances. If she had known as much as we nurses, he would not have happened."

As soon as she was able to leave the hospital, she rented a small furnished apartment and with a competent maid entered upon another phase of her life, which lasted till after Robert, her baby, had passed his third year.

Beautiful he was, with his fair baby skin, blue eyes and flaxen curls, which Edah was never tired of admiring and fussing with; and the embodiment of health, too, till he took the whooping cough in the fall.

Edah was not at first alarmed, but any little thing the matter with Robert always worried and distressed her.

When the coughing gained in violence and the little fellow began to waste away, the doctor advised taking him South and that was how it happened Edah and her sick child came to be in Biloxi.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERT slept late that first morning after their journey—and when breakfast was finished Edah was surprised to find how warm it had grown; there was heat in the rays of that bright November sun.

She ordered a hack and they drove about, looking at the quaint, old place.

The trees in full green foliage contrasted delightfully with the almost bare and leafless branches lifted high in the chilly air they had left behind a few short days before. The sight of the tall stemmed pines with their tufted tops outlined against the blue of the sky, and the wide-spreading branches of the large live oaks with their waving pennants of gray spanish moss, was quite new and intensely attractive to Edah, so long shut up in the city.

Robert was interested in everything he saw, especially the bright, glittering waters of the Sound with the white-winged schooners, cat-boats and other craft passing too and fro.

His mother glanced lovingly down at him thinking that already, even, he began to look better.

In less than a week, they were installed in a small cottage far back from the beach, where many of her neighbors were colored. Edah thinking it would be better for the child than closer to the water.

The house faced the south and like many others she saw, was painted white in front while the rough

finished weatherboarding of the sides had been treated to a coat of red.

The two connecting front rooms each opened out on to the usual "gallery," as the porches there were called, and were provided with fireplaces;—back of these were two other rooms somewhat smaller in size with a shed in the rear, which was used as a wash house.

"Primitive simplicity, sure enough," thought Edah, but it had been made very clean and thoroughly disinfected, true to her nurse's instincts. During the cleaning process Robert was allowed to play on the gallery in the warm sun. There was no doubting the fact that the mild air and sunshine were working wonders with him and Edah grew almost light-hearted. She began herself to feel the effects of outdoor life, and the freedom from the weight of a great anxiety.

They walked in the woods and along the water—on the front beach as well as along Back Bay. Robert builded houses of sand and dug unnumbered wells. His mother had not the heart to force him to play away from the beach when he loved it so, but it brought back memories to her of the cold, dark waters of Lake Michigan on that awful night! besides she was afraid of meeting people which her instinct was to shun.

The cook told her it was a little early for the winter visitors, but Edah knew she had met some people who like herself were walking aimlessly about picking up shells on the beach or gathering palmettoes in the woods—and of course she knew that she and Robert were objects of—"curiosity, was it?" at any rate, notice. None could help turning to look the second time at the fair, curly-haired boy, with red sweater and cap and the tall woman in black who looked so proud and reserved.

Several times she had met a pleasant-faced, gray-haired woman, generally carrying a book, who seemed always to be walking alone, and who invariably gave Edah a pleasant nod, which was returned very coldly at first. But no one could withstand the kindness of that smile—surely not Edah who was “hungering and thirsting,” for a friend with a longing away down in the depths of her soul that amounted almost to an obsession.

At the close of an early December day as Edah and Robert, with their new acquisition of a bob-tailed black and white fox terrier were slowly walking westward along the beach, they were overtaken by the silvery-haired lady who had evidently “come alongside” for a friendly chat.

Jack was inclined to look upon it in the light of an intrusion and gave a few sharp barks.

“’Top it, Jack, ’top it!” commanded the small autocratic owner, in a way to make his mother smile, wondering how soon he had acquired the tone.

“Good-evening; my name is Mrs. Williams, and yours—?”

“Mrs. Brown,” returned Edah,” and this is my son Robert and—” smiling—“Jack the ill-mannered, a very new member of the family.”

“I’ve not been here long and feel quite strange and I thought you looked that way too, which is my only apology,” said Mrs. Williams in her low voice.

“There is no need for any apology and you are right in your surmise about Robert and me being strangers.” And Edah related how ill her little boy had been and the wonders already worked in so short a time. The elder woman, from out her own large experience, knew how to enter in and sympathize so they chatted together in a friendly way as they walked along into the glowing sunset.

Presently the elder woman came to a full stop.

Far away over the water the evening sun was sinking low—his burning rays reddening sky and sea and lighting the billowy clouds with fires celestial. With tender, reverent eyes gazing through her gold-rimmed glasses she said, "Wonderful the Hand that wielded the brush and mixed those incomparable colors."

Together they drank in the loveliness of that scene, which appealed to the religious in each as well as to their love of the beautiful.

The chill in the night air warned Edah it was time to be going home. Experience had taught her the twilights were very short in this far away southern land.

"Come Robert, let mothey take your hand, we will go home in the car."

They turned northward at the first street, walking under the two stately rows of live-oaks whose giant branches interlaced many feet above the street, forming a high, vaulted arch of living green, with its swinging streamers of gray floating in the breeze.

"This is where I live, and I hope you will come often to see me," said Mrs. Williams, stopping at the gate of a neat white cottage, on the gallery of which sat an elderly man whom Edah rightly judged to be the husband of her new acquaintance.

"Robert and I will certainly do so."

"Tan Jack tum too?" spake up the small owner.

"Certainly he may, as often as you like—Good-night."

"Good-night."

As Edah sat waiting for the car with her little, tired boy in her lap, she felt strangely calm and peaceful. Something seemed to soften up within her heart, and comforting thoughts of God as seen through the wonderful sunset, and through the eyes of a new-found friend, covered her as with a mantle.

After Robert had eaten his bowl of whole wheat

bread and milk and been tucked away in his bed, Edah sat thinking of the day's events with alternate feelings of hope and joy, mingled with those of forlornness and despair, which she had come to look upon as her normal state forever. She had shrunk within herself so long it was almost impossible to break away from the habit. She was timorous and afraid at the way her heart had responded to the evidently proffered friendship.

"I'm not fit to have a worthy friend, and I do not want any other!" she groaned with face buried in her hands."

That poor, suffering, quivering heart of hers was yet to be the battle ground a while longer, of the forces of evil as opposed to the good: the former redoubling watchfulness and energies as signs of defeat—perhaps of complete rout—were faintly discernible in the breaking dawn.

Heavy-hearted she went to bed, after taking a last loving look at her rosy beautiful child.

They both slept late and Susie, the colored cook, as she let herself in for the day's work, could almost have carried off Edah's idol without disturbing either. The morning was dark and cloudy, and the days were short besides—making it easy for young, tired people to sleep.

There followed a week of rainy weather. Robert, used to the free outside life of the past month, grew tired of the house even with Jack's delightful companionship. Edah resorted to her full powers of entertainment assisted by all the devices at hand—which were many—with rather mixed results.

But even a rainy week comes to an end and it cleared off decidedly cold, but bright and sunny. However, it was not of the kind that freezes, and mother, boy and dog went for a glorious walk.

Everybody else was out too, and Edah noting many

unfamiliar faces, realized that the town was rapidly filling up with the season's visitors.

Edah's feet followed the direction her thoughts had taken the past days and they found themselves walking under the green vaulted arch. They met Mrs. Williams coming toward them, well wrapped from the chilly north wind.

"Good-afternoon, my dear," extending a hand. "How fared the shut-in week with the two small friends?" glancing down at the boy and dog but addressing Edah.

"Decidedly strenuous after the first day or two," returning the friendly greeting. "We've had so little rain since we came, that I fear we are all spoiled. But isn't this glorious?" sniffing the air as they walked.

They bent their steps in the direction of the post-office, the great social "rendezvous" of the visitors, before the day of postman and free delivery in the village. But they were not bound for that point—Edah wrote and received very few letters and Mrs. Williams' husband attended to much of that for her.

The air was too cold to keep Robert out long;—the friends arranged to have their lunch together in the woods the first warm morning and separated—the trio going northward to home and fire, while the friend retraced her steps alone.

Three days later—a mild, calm, peaceful Sabbath, when the air blew soft from the water—the large roll was strapped into shape, Robert interestedly watching every move, and Edah and her small boy were ready for the anticipated picnic. Susie too was to have a holiday.

"Be sure you fasten the house securely—and shut Jack up in the wash house, we're off," were the mistress's parting words.

If Edah had been less strong, the contents of the

shawl straps would have proved decidedly burdensome;—two thermos bottles, one of water, one of milk, a substantial lunch for three—an extra coat for Robert, fancy work, shawl and tarpaulin.

“Looks as if we were moving,” smiling down at her darling.

The word “moving” started the old train of thought, “where am I going,—what plans can I make for leaving here— No future, no past, only the tiniest bit of a present!”

“She must throw it off! Another was dependent upon her besides Robert for a pleasant day—she would listen to his loved chatter, and so forget for a while.”

They boarded the trolley on Pass Christian street and rode to the Bay, getting off where the car turned east. Edah sighted her friend sitting against a tree trunk some little distance ahead waiting for them.

“Well, here you are!” as they came up to where she sat—“I feared you had missed the car but I see we’re the delinquent ones. Too bad!”

“No, indeed,” rising— “Not in this wonderful place—on this perfect day!” glancing through the tree trunks to the blue waters of the shimmering bay—to the same colored sky seen through interlacing branches—to the forest of evergreen trees festooned with moss and southern smilax and the white-shell road taking the contour of the beach, stretching beyond.

As they continued on their way together Mrs. Williams said, “I think it would have been easy for me to worship with the Druids—to adore under great trees and on mountain tops. I cannot see how anyone can possibly fail to see God, if he thinks at all, when out in these woods with sky and water all around. No wonder the North American Indians, in their native simplicity, surrounded as they were by

those vast solitudes, were children of awe—reverently listening in silence for the Voice of the Great Spirit. They did not need for the Psalmist to say ‘Be still and know that I am God!’”

“What is God?” whispered Edah.

“The Great Intelligence—Maker of the Universe and Author of my being and yours;—entitled to all homage, adoration and love,” and she bowed her head in reverence.

After walking a while in silence she resumed—
“the indians were originally, before contaminated and outraged by contact with civilization, very religious in heart and mind. All their teaching was that of the God of Nature—unless it is true as some claim—they are the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, in that case their traditions would have incorporated in them some of the teachings of that far-away time.

The book of Revelation as well as that of Nature is open to us and yet, strange as it may seem, the lessons we could learn from them to our own spiritual advancement would place us far ahead of what we now are;—we are so blind—so blind!”

Remaining a while in thoughtful silence she continued—“Most of the treachery and vindictiveness of these children of Nature were retroactive from the cruel, heartless way in which their proffered kindness had been requited. Oh, the shame of it! civilization will yet have to stand before the bar of God’s justice to receive what it merits for all the deeds done in violation of His most Holy commands!” And righteous indignation filled her heart and reflected from the earnest features.

“Please excuse me, my dear young friend, for sermonizing;—my only excuse is that it’s Sunday, and all these wonderful things of His making were not to be resisted. But here we are at ‘Lover’s Lane’ or more correctly speaking ‘Lover’s Retreat.’”

"Robert and I have not been quite so far before although we have wandered along the Bay several times. Isn't it lovely, dear?" speaking to the child who was carrying his small, red pail and shovel and already making for the sandy beach which was not so nice as along the front but could be utilized in spots for "well-making."

Finding a suitable situation Edah opened the large bundle and took from it the tarpaulin and spread it in a sunny spot on the dry, pine needles which were thickly strewn over the ground, making a place in which Mrs. Williams could be comfortable, then gathered more of the fragrant straw to make a soft bed for Robert when sleepy time came.

Removing sewing apron and work-bag combined, containing the sweater she was knitting for the child, she restraped the lightened bundle and hung it to a twig saying rather hesitatingly, "Do you think it very wicked to sew or do fancy work on Sunday?"

"I think," said her friend smiling, "if one thinks it a sin to eat, for him it is sin; there are so many acts each one must decide for himself—but there are certain fixed and eternal things that admit of no variation—a 'thus saith the Lord' from which there is no retreat. A day of rest was certainly provided that hard-working humanity,—I mean the ones who really and truly toil—might have a chance to let down from the strain and stress, and give nature a chance to become normal again. What is your idea?" and she looked pleasantly into the beautiful face of her young friend.

"I—I don't know. Right and wrong seem to have become strangely confused in my mind. I was brought up to 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'—but somehow the old simplicity of outlook has passed away."

She said no more, but bent over her work while the

elder woman watched the little red cap bob up and down as its owner plied the small shovel, silently praying to be in some way helpful to this soul in distress.

A small launch passed filled with excursionists going up the Bay for a Sunday's outing; a couple of sail boats followed at intervals and but for the distant confused murmur of voices of those on board not a sound broke the stilly quiet of the air. All was so calm and tranquil.

Softly, beautifully, Mrs. Williams recited "The Forest Hymn" of Bryant beginning with "The Groves were God's first temples." The devout and reverent spirit permeating the stately and majestic lines, coupled with the beautiful surroundings, filled both speaker and listener with worshipful awe.

Edah arose and went to play with her boy a few minutes before sleepy time, feeling a strange inward peace.

Presently the two came up to the picnic ground, so laughing, jolly and chummy.

After she had given the child his lunch she held him a while in her arms, singing little rhymes in a low voice. It would have been hard to tell which loved it most—the recipient of the favors or the one who so delighted to give them. When the winking grew long, she drew off his shoes and sweater and placed him within the folds of the warm shawl on the bed of fragrant pine straw.

Mrs. Williams had been an interested onlooker. At the conclusion she feelingly said, "With all my heart I envy you, Mrs. Brown!"

"Envy me—*me*?" with a look of incredulous surprise in her face, leaning against a tree and fixedly gazing at the speaker.

"I was not thinking of our respective griefs and sorrows—everyone has those—'Each heart knoweth

its own bitterness'—neither was I thinking of your beauty—that is a gift I never possessed so I cannot mourn its loss—nor was I thinking altogether of your youth, although that might enter in. I'm not grieving for mine, now long since passed, as such;—I've entered the vale of old age and am content,—only—always,—I'm hoping I shan't die till I'm ready to be buried!" she fervently ejaculated.

After a moment—"No—I was thinking of your opportunities—possibilities."

Edah only looked and came and sat beside her waiting to be told what was that wonderful thing which presented itself to her friend's mind in her outlook upon life, that could possibly include her.

"You are absolutely free to carry out any and all of your righteous convictions, and secondly you have an innocent young soul to fit for time and eternity as well—if rightly prepared for the one, already fitted for the other—whereas I'm old—the sands of life are running low and short is the time left me in which to serve. I can think of nothing more sad than to know one has come to the end and done it all wrong!" and she bowed her gray head and covered her face with her hands.

Full of sympathetic sorrow for her friend's grief—yet not quite comprehending it—she was unable to make any reply. After a few moments spent in silence she arose and set about fixing their lunch.

"Please forgive me," said the elder woman. "I did not intend to thrust my woes upon you—but this wild longing to do the Master's bidding lies so near the surface it is easily uncovered."

Edah was still mystified but her friend's returning cheerfulness had a tranquilizing effect upon her and they ate their lunch talking in a light and happy vein.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Williams, "if the legends of this old place have as much interest and charm for

you as they have for me? You know it is one of the old places of the country. D'Iberville made his landing here on his voyage of discovery and a small white cross marks the supposed spot on the other side of the Bay, although I believe others claim the landing was effected on the Island adjoining the Point, which at that time must have been connected with the mainland, but has since been separated by the constant swirl of the waters around the eastern end. I enjoy those interesting traditions even if they are all shadowed in doubt.

"I saw the other day some charming little verses voicing the legends of the place in a rhythm and style so harmonious with their mystic meaning, and I committed some of them to memory."

"I should love to hear them," murmured Edah. With a far away look in her eyes she began—

"There is a time when summer stars are glowing,
And night is fair along the southern shore,
The sailor, resting where the tide is flowing,
Hears somewhere near, below his waiting oar,
A haunting tone, now vanishing, now calling,
Now lost, now luring like some Elfin air;
In murmurous music fathoms downward falling,
It seems a dream of song imprisoned there."

* * * * * *

"The legend tells of those who long have slumbered
A forest race too valorous to flee,
Who when in battle by their foes outnumbered
With clasping hands came singing to the sea.
The ocean drew them to her hidden keeping,
The stars watched o'er them in the deeps above,
Their death-song lingers, but the tones of weeping
Tell the eternity of human love."

They both sat silent—Edah seeming to hear the mysterious music softly echoing through the woods from shore to shore. But her friend's mind went back to its religious musings and she soliloquized aloud—

“Men have lived and died and the generations have gone on—great and wonderful things have been accomplished but—I sometimes wonder are we as advanced along lines of righteousness as we really might be—should be—after the lapse of so many centuries? and if not, *why* not?”

“I have a theory that we might have gone ‘cross-lots’ long ago, into the promised land, and escaped the devious wanderings through the cane-brakes, swamps, tangled vines and bushes of the wilderness of Zin—had we only been obedient to our Heaven-given chart.

“But we did not see fit to enter in and take possession. Instead, like our prototype of old, we held back saying in frightened, awe-struck tones ‘there are giants over there!’ and our day of grace has long since gone by and we are moving with ever accelerating speed to our logical conclusion.

“Perhaps death itself might have been bound and thrown into the bottomless pit long since had we only seen fit to obey. It seems to me that obedience is worship to-day, the same as it was in the time of Samuel.”

Of a sudden the shawl was thrown back and the occupant bobbed up into a sitting posture announcing, “I’s awake!”

’Twas a way he often had and one which his mother thought altogether charming and irresistible.

He was dressed and “snuggled” a while and given his share of the feast, then the things were packed and faces turned homeward.

They walked slowly along in the short December

afternoon—Robert urging speed in his desire to get back to his pet.

“Huhwy, mothey, huhwy, Jack wants me!”

They paused at the avenue where Mrs. Williams lived, to wait for the car.

“I dare say picnicing days will be getting more scarce for a while,” said the latter—“Christmas is less than two weeks off. It seems hard to realize,” glancing at the green boughs overhead.

“It’s not the kind we are used to, surely, and if I were a child I should wonder how Santa Claus were ever to get here with his sleigh and reindeer—for Susie says Christmas doesn’t seem natural without rain.”

“Well, rain or shine, I want you and Robert to make no other arrangements for that day—for we want you with us.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Williams, it is so good of you—we’ll be glad to come, won’t we, Robert?” But that individual tugged at his mother’s finger, only bent on home and Jack.”

“Speaking of Santa Claus leads me to say”—and she interrupted herself with a laugh—“you see I have not done sermonizing! I’ve had grave doubts whether we do right in imposing this beautiful little fiction upon children. ‘We, of larger growth,’ love to recall delightful memories of that enchanted time, but children as children do not like to be imposed upon—they despise being humbugged;—as an evidence the first thing an enlightened child does is to impart his wisdom to others. Here comes your car,” holding out her hand—“I thank you, my dear, for a truly pleasant day.”

Edah took it in hers saying, “I cannot tell you what it has been to me.”

And Mrs. Williams noted a dewy softness in the deep, brown eyes that she had not seen before.

Edah had always found that part of the day hardest after Robert's merry chatter had given place to sleep. The long, winter evenings had been a terrible nightmare. She seemed to have lost her taste for reading, so, much of her sewing was done then—accompanied by bitter reflections.

To-night, however, as she worked at the sweater she was making, her needles simply flew—keeping time to the new, unusual thoughts that passed through her brain.

Mrs. Williams' invitation made her feel strange—queer—and her same old doubts about getting and keeping a friend under "false pretenses" assailed her. "It was one thing," she said to herself, "to meet and enjoy each other under the leafy trees with only nature to see, and quite another to partake of the hospitality of her home; besides she might meet others."

But these brooding thoughts were crowded out of her mind by the earlier events of the day.

'Twas her first sermon in years, her first little "glimpse of Heaven, in oh, so long!"

During those years in the city after her baby was born her soul simply starved. She groped blindly about in all directions feeling if she might find God,—she did not want to be a pagan—she never for a moment forgot there *was* a God—she couldn't,—but she had gotten out of touch.

Once she thought she would seek the church whose teachings her aunt's friends had so often urged upon her. "No sin, suffering or death!" No evil or wrong-doing! "her every waking breath nailed that as false."

Then she thought of her own old faith and she pictured the large churches of that denomination with their soft, shaded, stained-glass light and holy quiet—their solemn religious ceremonies—magnificent and costly organs—faultless and expensive choirs and the

silver-tongued orators from the pulpits expounding the way of life. And then she thought of herself stealing in, an outcast woman with her baby in her arms. For she never left him even for an hour. Her shopping and business were accomplished with her maid by her side holding the child. It was on one of these expeditions he had been exposed to the whooping-cough.

The incongruity of the picture her imagination had depicted curved her lips in a scornful smile. So she grew hard and unfeeling. She wrapped her cloak of misery about her and silently suffered.

But that was past—and she sat now before her brightly blazing fire thinking new thoughts.

CHAPTER VII.

“You can’t guess where we’re going, you and mothey,” as the two paused in the sunshine at their gate, equipped for walking, a few days after their picnic in the woods. “We’re going down to the beach, and maybe we’ll go in a little boat ’way—’way out over the water, won’t that be nice?”

The child was delighted—he had often coaxed to go;—“May Jack tum too?”

“Oh, no! He might jump out of the boat and we couldn’t get him a-n-y more; he’ll have to stay with Susie.”

That was a damper for a few minutes but was forgotten before they reached the beach.

Boys and skiffs were not so plenty at that season of the year but diligent inquiry unearthed first one and then the other.

Edah took her seat in the stern of the boat with her boy on her lap, and they were off. It was a new experience for both mother and child and as Edah looked down into the water which was so very, very close, she shuddered;—memories of that wild night on Michigan’s shore leaped into her mind and she was afraid of herself. “It would be so easy to sink beneath those waters with her boy in her arms! No past to grieve over—no future to worry about!”

The force and suddenness of the thought alarmed her, for of late her mind had been more at rest.

Robert's exclamations of rapturous delight and his perfect, childish confidence in her care and protection caused a reaction of feeling and with an effort she gave her attention to the sixteen-year-old lad who was handling his oars most cleverly. They glided over the sparkling surface in a way to throw Robert into ecstasies and which gradually dispelled his mother's dark and morbid thoughts.

"Robert and I are going on a tour of inspection and will not be gone a great while," said Edah as the boat touched at the low pier in front of the Island; "when we return I should like to try rowing myself if you can give instructions and hold my boy at the same time," smiling into his face. Later the return trip was made in that manner. She was awkward with the oars, but the lad was a fairly good instructor and they did not overturn.

When they were once more on land Edah said, as she handed him his pay, "Now, every day that it is at all suitable I'm going to want you—sometimes for an hour or two and sometimes for all day. Can I count on you?" and so it was arranged.

By the time the weather began to warm in February Edah was quite an expert oarswoman. She and Robert with Frank and the skiff became a familiar sight to the boatmen as well as the wandering tourists along the beach.

The walks were not neglected either—they simply lived outdoors and the life was telling on both in a marvelous way. Edah had almost ceased to think: she basked in the warm love of child and friend and in the beauties of nature.

After the three o'clock dinner she and Mrs. Williams, with the small boy and dog, would walk and talk when the weather permitted, and their souls were knit together as were the souls of David and Jonathan of old. Edah had longed for her friend to go with

them in the small boat but she was timid about the water and all entreaties were unavailing until at last she herself proposed it.

"Come, Robert," said Edah one evening after several days of rain, as she stood in the door of their little home, "you and I and Jack, will walk down to the beach to see the sun go down, I think it is going to be fine," glancing skyward and westward through the plummy pine tops.

No need to call Jack, there he was at their feet, wagging his stump of a tail and showing every evidence of dog delight. The three walked together down Grand Jack Alley, Robert and his "Mothey" hand in hand, the canine running on before.

Turning westward on the beach the wonderful vision burst upon them. Involuntarily Edah stopped—"Glory, Robert, Glory!" with an in-drawn breath—clasping the little hand more closely.

Indescribably beautiful it was; the sun had disappeared leaving in its wake a long afterglow of rich and radiant coloring. Along the western horizon lay a bank of smoke-colored clouds, as of a great prairie fire, with tongues of flame darting through; above, a wide band of nile green sky separated it from a crimson cloud stretching away to the south which reflected in the tide water near the shore the same brilliant hue. A broad expanse of beautiful blue sea spread to the southeast and was swallowed up where sky and water met and mingled in soft, evening gray. A solitary schooner sailing homeward with its freight of oysters was silhouetted against the changing sky.

Gradually the rose-cloud faded; all the wealth of coloring was concentrated on the rich purple-blue of the vanished smoke cloud, with its smoldering red above, which, by degrees merged and faded into the pale, evening sky.

Robert and Jack ran ahead while Edah walked more slowly drinking in the beauty of that wonderful picture, never twice the same.

As she approached, Mrs. Williams rose from a wayside bench where she, too, had been watching the splendid miracle—old, yet ever new—and looking upon her friend's beloved countenance thought she could understand something of the light that shone on Moses' face when he descended from the Mount of Communion with God.

"Isn't it glorious!" exclaimed Edah.

Her companion quoted, "Thy glories are new every morning and fresh every evening."

The silence of worship brooded over them as they walked along together in the fading light—Robert and Jack running ahead.

When the shades of evening had absorbed the brilliant coloring leaving only a lingering, radiant memory they turned their faces homeward.

"Take mothey's hand, Robert."

"Look, mothey, see the wed 'tars!" pointing a little forefinger out over the water.

Edah smiled, fondly squeezing the baby hand as she looked in the direction indicated where the beacon lights outlining the channel softly glowed against the dark, gray sky—reflecting themselves in the water below in elongated points of red, reaching shoreward.

"It is wonderful the distances my small boy walks in the course of a day; I did not dream one of his age could do it."

"My dear girl," said the elder, "I dare say we would all be astonished if we only knew the capabilities of children in every direction, if only allowed to develop along their own natural lines." Adding with a laugh, "I've another little sermon to preach some day on this very subject—it seems to be in my system and will have to come out!"

"You'll find me far from being a self-satisfied audience—even an enlightened one, I fear. Robert and I have enjoyed several lovely, mild days on the Island lately; to-morrow we might have a picnic at Point Cadet, I fancy it will be fine."

"I really believe I've conquered my foolish nervousness over the water—but you know half a century, and then some, of inland life is hard to get away from, but I'm going to make the effort, and if you like we might have our picnic on the Island."

"Of all things. I really don't think you will notice it at all after the first few minutes—after you get over feeling how close you are to the water."

At ten the next morning the little skiff "Katie M" put out to sea with an extra passenger.

After the ordeal was over and a landing effected, Mrs. Williams confessed, "It wasn't as bad as I had expected—quite. Perhaps I shan't mind the return trip—may even enjoy it," with a doubtful little laugh.

"Frank, if you will kindly see that our luggage is safely transferred to the large cedar tree on the south side you may return for the day—only look occasionally to see if my signal is flying," and she playfully waved a large red cotton handkerchief. At any rate be sure to be here by four."

The sand was white and clean, and plentiful enough to satisfy the soul of even the most exacting child, with water on three sides of their chosen picnic grounds.

The sun was warm and quiet reigned supreme save for the lapping of the water and the occasional appearance of a lean pig or two, belonging to a house some distance in the interior, which Edah dispersed with the aid of oyster shells gathered by Robert on previous visits for that very purpose. She had prepared a small fish-pole with string and bent-pin hook attachment in case the sand-digging palled—then set-

tled herself with her work for an enjoyable talk or hour of listening, facing her boy in his play.

"Perhaps this is a propitious time for the dissertation on matters educational," laughed Edah, "I'm ready."

"There's no denying I'm full of my subject, but like Moses of old I'm slow of speech," as she too began her knitting.

"The old saying has it, 'every road leads to Rome,' so with me every topic leads to religion before I get very far in it: which same convinces me that *it* should be the starting point;—one could radiate then in all directions, bringing up as one starts, with the great fixed and eternal principles of Righteousness and in my opinion we'll never arrive anywhere till we do. You know it is said 'nothing is ever settled until it is settled right,' and without the yard measure of the Sermon on the Mount no boundaries can be definitely and decidedly fixed."

"You believe in the Bible? In the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures?" inquired Edah—thinking somehow of her doubts in the olden days before her own sorrows entered in.

"Yes, my dear, in this way. The Old Testament is a splendid, granite base, upon which is reared a magnificent, glistening, snow-white shaft whose summit pierces the clouds and is lost to mortal vision!" gazing into the deep blue above as if trying to discern that lofty elevation. After a short silence——

"I think with the apostle, 'Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Light, when Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.' If that was true in one period of the world's history, it is equally true to-day."

"Mothey, I'se thusty," said a little voice at their side—calling both women to earth again—and Robert threw himself into his mother's lap at the same time

pulling off his little cap, revealing his moist curls, damp with the effort of his exertions.

He had his drink and mother and boy chatted and laughed together till lunch and sleepy time came, the friend looking on as at a beautiful and much-loved picture.

When he was soundly sleeping in the shade of a near cedar tree Edah resumed her work, waiting for her friend to speak.

“What is there in life that can equal the delight one has in a little child? which of course, at the same time is freighted with such tremendous responsibility! We do not even dream to what heights the race might attain if only education were rightly done, in the beginning and all along the line. By education I mean all teaching the child receives for good or evil, from his very beginning; and the light unthinking way in which people undertake the contract for the direction and guidance of children is pitiable in the extreme. However, I’ve about come to the conclusion that no training—only the instinctive love of the mother which calls forth and begets the same in her child—is infinitely better than that which most children get.

“A very deep thinker along those lines has said, ‘the ways of harming a child are infinite while the ways of being useful to him are few:’ and peace is insisted upon—never in life is the need greater, and we who are old know how essential it is to *our* well-being—peace in all conditions and under all circumstances.

“It almost makes me shudder when I think how difficult it must be for the young, inexperienced mind to be groping about trying to ‘find itself’ with some one always plaguing the life out of it by trying to force it into a different channel—one of their own choosing. The contest is so unequal!

"Yes," she added with vehemence, "we shrivel and dwarf and harden and so make them like ourselves—when instead they might almost soar on ether and hold communion with the angels!"

"I,—I fear I'm one of those unthinking ones who are criminally responsible," faltered Edah. "It is time I were waking up."

"May God help us all to cease from slumbering and be alive to everything that makes for righteousness," fervently added her friend. And only the soft sound of the gently lapping water was heard in the stillness.

Rousing herself she continued, "One of the tragedies of the times—perhaps *the* crime of the ages—is our prostitution, subornation, subjugation of the mind—soul of a little child, its one great priceless treasure. We are guilty of the wrong of having usurped the kingdom of another while the sovereign of that domain had as yet not attained to the age at which he could 'come into his own.' A blacker crime has never been committed;—deposing a king in battle array is as nothing in comparison;" winding up in an awestruck whisper mounting to horror.

After a pause she continued, "If only people would see to it that the first seven years of the child's life—the formative ones—it were everywhere taught the same beautiful things approved by both saints and sinners the world over! Love, truthfulness, honesty, sincerity, obedience, industry and a forgiving spirit; remembering always that the parents' own *life* is the child's most impressive lesson!"

"He *should* be allowed to enter the next period, that of study, with an unbiased mind—his inalienable right of possession. Long before his seventh year is passed he will have heard the Voice of the God of Nature speaking to his inquiring soul, and later when he comes to the Bible he will approach its pages un-

prejudiced—reaching his own honest conclusions which none has a right to gainsay. But alas! that is not the usual method,” and she sighed.

“Most of the rules and regulations of its early life are a positive crime against the child which he is dimly conscious of yet powerless to resist and which we are not great enough—strong enough to see and change. It is nothing short of awful!” and the expression of her features corresponded with her words.

“After mothers have done their worst”—Edah shuddered—“they are sent to the schools to be *finished*! and sensitive, refined mothers, who would not see a mouse killed, sit calmly by and watch their children’s souls murdered! Nay, more, they are even a party to it!”

A horrified “impossible” broke from Edah’s lips.

“It seems hard to believe but is true nevertheless. It is as natural for a child’s mind to reach out after knowledge as it is for him to breathe; one child may be deeply interested in one thing, and another will be eager for something else—but both are put at something *neither* are interested in, and perhaps at a time when tired and nervous from long restraint! Someone has said, ‘without appetite for it—instruction is an evil—a terrible evil, causing people to become mentally crippled for life.’

“The writer from whom I’ve already quoted says, ‘the modern school has succeeded in doing something, which, according to the law of physics is impossible—the annihilation of once existent matter! The desire for knowledge, the capacity for acting by one’s self, the gift of observation—all qualities children bring with them to school, have, as a rule, at the close of the school period, disappeared.’

“It is very often the case that students acquire knowledge at the cost of their personality—at the price of such qualities as assimilation, reflection, observa-

tion and imagination. I have an idea if the knowledge of the three 'R's' cannot be obtained without dwarfing or blighting the personality of the child they should remain unlearned—I think God would rather have righteousness than even Latin or Greek.

"Our present school system seems to me to resemble Dunderbeck's machine; into the great hopper is thrown the weak, the strong, the modest, timid and shrinking—the ubiquitous bully, the embryonic genius and the children of the moral and physical degenerate—the crank is turned and they all come out—sausage!"

"Is there no help for poor mortals?" said Edah with a sad little smile. For all of this was vital to her as well as to the speaker although for somewhat different reasons; one was thinking of her own small boy—the other of humanity.

"Yes, there is help. The whole matter might be summed up like this:—It is the duty of the parent, the God-appointed educator to see that the child is placed in its natural, therefore right and proper environment and then proceed in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand *to educate herself.*"

Edah thought she could understand something of what her friend had meant when she said, "her work had been done all wrong;" perhaps her outlook on life had changed when it was too late.

She kept revolving it all in her mind as she laid the cloth on the clean white sand and set out the good lunch Susie had prepared.

While they ate her friend continued—"as I said in the beginning, all instruction should begin with teaching the child the things which are right—and there again the parent or teacher must first get right herself for you know even had the Bible not said it, that it were folly for the blind to try to lead the blind.

"If we have time after lunch I would like to wind up my little talk, which of course is the merest outline of that vast and far-reaching subject, with a little extract from this book which I prize so highly," and she drew from her bag a small volume of Tolstoy's Essays and Letters.

Again Edah's memory went back to that far-away time—to her other life shut away from this by her sin—when thoughts of that writer and the ideas he promulgated were most disquieting; but now no outlook could cause her a ripple of disturbance, as compared with the unceasing vision of her own life's history.

"We can read till Robert wakens, and after he has his lunch there will be time to finish, I fancy; it is early," glancing at her watch.

As Mrs. Williams opened the book a small clipping fluttered to the ground. "I had almost forgotten this—something from Ruskin—with which you are doubtless familiar."

"No, please read it."

"Well, it never does any harm to refresh one's memory with choice things like this," and she read in her pleasant way, "When do you suppose the education of a child begins? At six months' old it can answer smile with smile, and impatience with impatience. It can observe, enjoy and suffer, acutely, and in a measure, intelligently. Do you suppose it makes no difference to it that the order of the house is perfect and quiet, the faces of its father and mother full of peace, their soft voices familiar to its ear, and even those of strangers, loving; or that it is tossed from arm to arm, among hard, or reckless, or vain-minded persons, in the gloom of a vicious household, or the confusion of a gay one? The moral disposition is, I doubt not, greatly determined in those first speechless years."

She paused; "and yet"—reflectively—"we wonder that the race is not better!"

"Oh, the monumental responsibility of parenthood!" and Edah sighed.

"Let's see what Tolstoy has to say about it," and Mrs. Williams reopened the book. "This is an extract from a letter written to a relative," and she proceeded to read—"I think the first consideration of a good education is, that the child should know that all he uses does not fall from heaven ready-made, but is produced by other people's labor.

"To understand that all he lives on comes from the labor of others, people who neither know nor love him, is too much for a child (God grant he may understand it when he is grown up); but to understand that the chamber-pot he uses is emptied and wiped without any pleasure, by a nurse or a housemaid, and that the boots and goloshes he always puts on clean are cleaned in the same way—not out of love for him, but for some other reason quite unintelligible to him—is something he can and should understand, and of which he should be ashamed.

"If he is not ashamed and if he continues to use them that is the very worst commencement of an education, and leaves the deepest traces for his whole life. To avoid that, however, is very simple. Let them do all they can for themselves; carry out their own slops, fill their own jugs, wash up, arrange their rooms, clean their boots and clothes, lay the table, etc. It is true that here the chief difficulty crops up: children do willingly *only what their parents do*, and therefore I beg of you, do these things.

"This will effect two objects at once; it makes it possible to learn less, by filling the time in the most useful and natural way, and it trains the children to simplicity, to work, and to self-dependence.

"Please do this. You will be gratified from the first

month and the children yet more so. If to this you can add work on the land, if it be but a kitchen-garden, that will be well, though it too often becomes a mere pastime.

“The necessity of attending to one’s own needs and carrying out his own slops is admitted by all of the best schools. * * * * * Believe me, that without that condition there is no possibility of a moral education, a Christian education, or a consciousness of the fact that all men are brothers and equals.

“A child may yet understand that a grown-up man, his father—a banker or turner, an artist or an overseer, who by his work feeds the whole family—may free himself from occupations which prevent his giving all his time to his profitable work.

“But how can a child—as yet untried and unable to do anything—explain to himself that others do for him what he should naturally do for himself.

“The only explanation for him is that people are divided into two classes—masters and slaves; and however much we may talk to him in words about equality and the brotherhood of man, all the conditions of his life, from his getting up, to his evening meal, show him the contrary.

“Not only does he cease to believe what his elders tell him about morality, he sees in the depth of his soul that all these teachings are mendacious, and he ceases to believe his parents and teachers, and ceases even to believe in the need for any kind of morality whatever.

“Yet one more consideration. If it is not possible to do all that I have mentioned, at least one must set children to do things the disadvantage of not doing which would be at once felt by them—e. g., if one’s clothes and boots for going out in are not clean, one must not go out! If water has not been fetched and the crockery washed up, there is nothing to drink.

“Above all, in this matter do not be afraid of ridicule. *Nine-tenths of all the bad things in the world are done because not to do them would be held ridiculous!*”

She closed the book; “how altogether right he is in making these plain, simple, homely matters the foundation of everything—even to the idea of the universal brotherhood of man. Love to our fellows, you know, is the only way we have of showing love to our Maker.”

Edah’s work had fallen in her lap and she sat with her hands clasped about one knee—eyes bent on the sand. In low tones of conviction—“deep down in my heart something tells me he is right. Any mother might start that way if she only could see and know.” Looking into her friend’s face, “Isn’t he wonderfully clear and simple in his manner of writing?—and so conclusive.”

“Very. Take it home with you,” handing her the book from which she had just been reading, “and you need not return it. You’ll find it deals with vital truths concerning religion and morality put in such a strong, forceful way, one cannot escape his conclusions.”

“Thank you so much,” putting the small volume in the bundle which she was doing up. “I’m sure I will enjoy reading it for your sake if for no other reason,” looking up with a smile.

“Come Robert,” to that individual who had wakened and eaten and was busy at play—“wave this so Frank will see and come for us,” reaching out the red signal. “Hasn’t this been a lovely day? I shall remember it long,” and Edah’s eyes swept the waste of waters southward.

The elder woman’s thoughts again went up in silent prayer that the seed sown might bear fruit.

With considerable trepidation on her part, Mrs.

Williams was finally gotten off the wharf into the boat and the smooth ride home was begun.

"Frank tells me he has seen the water here in summer time so phosphorescent that the oars seem dipping in liquid fire—and the drops that fall as they are raised and lowered are literally like sparks! Is it not true?" And Frank was launched on "summer time and the sea," a topic he was never tired of discoursing upon when Edah encouraged it, which she often did for she, too, had grown to love this calm and tranquil body of water with its varying moods.

As they neared the landing, "Do you know I'm tempted to remain here all summer—till you and Mr. Williams return in the fall:" said Edah musingly.

"I think you might find it enjoyable, from what Frank says."

And that individual's entire being was permeated with gladness at Edah's words.

That night Edah sat and pondered, with her friend's book in her lap. It was not altogether a tranquil reliving of the events of the day—although she dwelt long on the wonderful, to her, revelation concerning the nature and training of a child. She had never dreamed of the vast heights and depths of that most important subject. "No wonder the world is what it is! Oh, the mutilated, crippled little innocents!" and her sympathetic heart ached with the thought.

She opened her book and tried to get interested, but she was restless. Finding she could not read, she took up her work, but that led to thinking and planning for the future. "Where?" "What?" "Back to the life without a friend?"

"Unthinkable!"

Neither did she welcome the thought of visiting for a while, and remaining near Mrs. Williams, as the latter had urged. "There were the married children who might not understand—or might, which? and

who would poison their mother's mind and heart against her."

But underneath and underlying these reflections was another which had troubled her on many previous occasions and which, like the famous ghost would not down. "She must no longer delay the confession to this good, unsuspecting woman—no longer claim this priceless friendship with that dark secret in her soul. 'Twas gaining and keeping it under false pretenses," an offense against which her honest soul revolted.

The final decision was reached at last, and she was almost feverish with the desire to have it over.

She went late to bed, but her sleep was broken and fitful. She was glad she had decided, but she wanted to know her fate at once. For the most part she could not think of that friend casting her off—but the doubts *would* come by spells—and oh! how she dreaded to see the shade of disappointment and coldness cross those loved features.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE following day was foggy—the deep, dense kind that just rolls in off the sea—enveloping everything in its moist, shadowy arms.

Edah's spirits were in accord with the day—low, damp and depressing. She was restless—setting the house in order with an energy surprising to Susie, whose work had been usurped—taking up her sewing for a few minutes, then laying it down again.

Robert soon caught the infection and began to fuss—Jack whined to be let out of that uncongenial atmosphere and even Susie must have come in for a share of the general disturbance, for Edah heard distinct sounds of smashing crockery from the vicinity of the kitchen.

Things were beginning to get unbearable to the mistress.

“Come Robert,” she said with decision, “we will go for a walk, it’s only fog!”

So the three set out in the direction of the Live Oak avenue. As they walked the fog seemed to grow lighter and by the time they knocked at Mrs. Williams' door it had dispelled sufficiently for Edah to appear sane in her request to that lady to join them in a walk.

“Surely—I shall be delighted: but come in and sit for a while, I’m not quite ready.”

Robert preferred to remain outside with Jack—

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and Edah noted the crystal drops that hung on each fairy curl, and clustered on the fuzzy wool of his little cap.

By the time they were once more started, the fog and mist had rolled away, and Edah felt somehow that it was a good omen, and her spirits rose accordingly.

"We will stop by the house, and I'll see what can be made ready on such short notice, for a respectable lunch."

Susie was singing a Sunday-school hymn and had apparently recovered "tone"—if indeed she had lost any—and set about cheerfully to get together what was available in the house.

They walked down to Pass Christian street thence eastward toward the Point—Robert's favorite picnic ground outside of Deer Island—past a vacant lot near the heart of the village where a group of elderly men in shirt sleeves were industriously playing quoits.

Every sunny day found many of these men engaged in that health-giving pastime; men who had come from their farms in Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois—leaving the cold and ice and their hard-working days behind them, to enjoy the mildness of this salubrious clime and their long deferred rest, in this the evening time of their lives.

The women nodded to Mr. Williams, who was one of the number, and all in return had a word for the child.

"I'm selfishly glad you are not known and appreciated so well by everyone as by myself," said Edah as they moved along—"however, their loss is my gain," with an affectionate smile.

"Habit is a hard thing to overcome," returned the other. "In my earlier years I was a very busy woman, as you may imagine, with eight children and only limited means: but in spite of their wealth or their

poverty I like people even if I am slow about making new friends."

They walked leisurely, for Robert's little legs were getting tired, chatting as they went.

After reaching their objective point, the extreme end of Point Cadet—where Mississippi Sound merges into Back Bay, they sat down to rest under a great oak tree—even Robert being willing to sit a while in his mother's lap, while she ran her fingers through his soft curls.

It was a quiet, unfrequented spot, well shaded with large live-oaks and magnolias and Edah loved it especially because Robert was so happy there. He was never tired of looking at the sails that passed, calling out to her, "Mothey, see—there tums 'nothah 'choonah!" and watching with interest the slow opening and closing of the draw-bridge to let the boats pass from one side to the other; and the long railway trains that crossed over the low bridge were a source of unending delight.

His mother's gentle, caressing touch was too soothing to be resisted by the tired little fellow. Mrs. Williams opened the strap and took from it the shawl and spread it in a selected spot and he was soon 'tucked in' for a nice, comfortable sleep.

Edah stood some minutes looking down at her sleeping boy, silent and distraught; then her gaze wandered out over the water as if seeking help and strength to speak of that which had been so long locked tight in her own bosom.

Her friend knew she was laboring under some inward excitement and felt sorry for her: whatever it was she longed to kiss it away as a mother would comfort her little child.

Presently Edah came and sat beside the elder woman. With unsteady voice and burning face she

faltered, "I've—I've something I wish to tell you," and paused.

"Well, dearie, never mind about it now, if it troubles you to tell it, but—perhaps I might help straighten matters out."

"Oh, nothing can ever do that!" and she buried her face in her friend's lap that no eyes might see her shamed look, and told the whole miserable story.

The friend gently stroked the beautiful hair, now loosened and tumbled about, mumuring softly, "you poor, dear child—dear child."

Then when Edah grew calm and still—"Listen! Do you not remember what the great Teacher said? 'Neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more.' If the Holy One and Sinless could forgive—how much more should poor erring mortals! But"—and she sighed, "in the false way the world has of looking at things in general, and this matter in particular, man has only to render an account to a forgiving God—while woman has to reckon with a hard and most *unforgiving* world as well;—still there is comfort to be found, in that if God be with us, let the whole world be against us."

Edah only groaned by way of reply.

In a low tone her friend went on—"That woman, whosoever and whatsoever she is,—black, white, red or yellow,—to whom a man first unites himself without the ceremony of priest, bishop or pope—*that woman is his wife* according to the fixed and unchangeable law of God, no matter how much we may try to deceive ourselves by thinking otherwise." Adding by way of parenthesis, "our man-made rules and regulations concerning marriage make me think of our trying to change by law the sum of two and two. Any and all additional or subsequent unions with another, so long as she does live, will have to be classed under the head of adultery. The father of your

boy"—she felt Edah shudder at the words—"Is your lawful husband in the eyes of heaven; and you are as much his wife as nine-tenths of the married women of our land, who look so haughtily down upon their sisters who have side-stepped!"

Edah sprang up—electrified—and gazed at her friend almost in fear that her reason had departed.

But her companion went calmly on.

"It is quite impossible for me to believe these terrible institutions of vice and iniquity which abound in all our social centers, and which are so costly both as to life and money, are maintained and sustained by and for the *fathers* of the land exclusively.

"No—no—I feel I'm quite right in my statement that there are few wives in our land, or any other, who are not living in concubinage. And how can we hope for anything but increasing misery so long as these things be true?

"Even after marriage many a man has purchased for himself full and free absolution for all sorts of irregularities by large emoluments given the wife of his bosom, *who oftentimes knowingly accepts the same in lieu of unbroken marriage vows!*

"When the women of this and all other lands will consent to relegate the '*fallen man*' to the same *limbo* they sentence their erring sisters, the world will spring forward and upward in great leaps and bounds along the line of rightness. But so long as virtuous, noble women continue to ostracize their delinquent sisters and condone the same offense in their brothers, conditions will never be any better."

And she prayerfully added, "would that both men and women would enter the '*Kingdom of Self-respect*' and dwell therein evermore!"

Edah sat with hands clasped about one knee—her face reflecting the vital, absorbing interest she felt. She had almost forgotten her own miserable con-

fession as she listened to her companion's strange and new—to her at least—outlook on life.

She hesitatingly asked—"But don't you think the male of the species is constituted somewhat differently from the female in that in a majority of cases they are governed by stronger passions?"

"If I have read aright, the great and eternal laws of the Almighty are not intended for obedience *only* when that obedience is easy—'Thou shalt not commit adultery' was meant for observance regardless of the ease or difficulty attending it.

"This law, like all others, was not labeled 'to be observed if convenient—to be disregarded if otherwise.'

"If the command has grown obsolete for man's observance it is also inoperative for the woman.

"Once was, when woman made excursions into the by and forbidden paths of shame she brought back with her the evidences of her guilt; but she has become wise in her day and generation and can now enter the realm of iniquity with the same 'let the world prove it' air as a man."

She paused—"I am minded of a 'heart to heart' talk I had with my colored laundress the other day after missing various and sundry stockings, handkerchiefs and towels.

"'Yes, Miss Jane,' she admitted, 'it's a great wrong to take anything that don't belong to you—*the sin is in being found out!*'

"I was only left guessing as to my erstwhile belongings;" and she smiled at the remembrance.

"This poor woman only reflected what the world has come to accept;—so long as we can escape detection, wrong-doing is not a crime apparently; and women are becoming wise as to detection—hence their absolution!

"A learned judge on the bench has, after grave and

serious deliberation handed down his decision that a man may take little dives into the underworld and return—none the worse for the trip—the same loving, tender, thoughtful husband and father as before.

“ ’Tis a poor rule that won’t work both ways and woman is testing the verdict in her own case.

“ Perhaps we are needing just such an object lesson as this, along with all the other object lessons we are receiving!” look and tone corresponding with her words.

“ My dear young friend, an early marriage with good, hard, physical labor combined with plainness of diet is a great corrective for lasciviousness and debauchery and the ‘ sin in high places.’ ”

Remaining silent a while in deep thought, she presently resumed—

“ God’s laws were made—not for the good of mankind, for his training and uplift;—they *are* because they *are*!

“ A Perfect and Holy Being could only have laws that were in accord with Himself.

“ To give humanity a chance these laws have been revealed to man for his own edification and perfecting. So they go forever on—and when humanity runs in accord all goes well—if counter to and against—then sorrow and suffering is their portion.”

These things had long been in her mind—only awaiting fitting opportunity to be put into speech. She had surmised something of what her young friend had embodied in her confession—and her sympathetic pity had augmented her already tender love for the beautiful young woman who seemed so aloof from her kind. Laying her hand affectionately on Edah’s arm she continued—

“ God did not give me a mind that could believe a thing was both black and white at one and the same time. So when the scriptures make the Son of Man

to say there is no separation for the twain when once united—and in another place that they can be divorced—it is quite impossible to believe both; and I elect to take the command which is most in accord with the rest of his utterances. They may choose to live apart, but *never* can either be united to another while both live, according to the great, fixed and eternal laws of righteousness.”

And she added mournfully and low, “this man has seen fit to condemn you to a life of singleness so long as he lives.”

“Oh, if that were only all!” moaned the unhappy young woman.

“To blight another’s life,” continued the speaker, “is one of the terrible results of a disregard of rectitude in one’s own life, and it is no small thing he and others of his kind will have to answer for in the final readjustment if not before. ’Tis a pity the sinner cannot bear all of his own guilt, without scattering the burden and blight of it on to the innocent.”

“But I’m not innocent!” hiding her burning face in her hands and forgetting for the moment what was generally uppermost in her mind—her innocent boy.

Her friend put her arm reassuringly about her as she went on—“Sanctified union was instituted to relieve the repression to which human nature would otherwise be subjected, so that the strong, hopeful, constructive years might be filled with useful purpose and endeavor, instead of the continual nervous strain of resistance to nature’s demands, that warps instead of strengthens the character when carried to too great lengths.

“Men—and women too, why not? feel the necessity for mating—feel the call of their animal natures—but, oh! they are going about it so wrong! so wrong!

“They are letting themselves down to the level of their lower natures instead of keeping it in subjection

to the higher. It is like eating the rich and tasty food, saying, 'I don't think it hurts me any'—instead of saying, 'this other is good for blood, bone and muscle,' and eating the wholesome things." As her companion remained silent, she went on—

"A great deal of the present disorder, confusion, sin and suffering is due to the lack of right early training—all of it, I suppose," with a sigh.

"The young should be reared to an outlook that will embrace the *whole* of life. Anything short of that is a criminal wrong, to my mind. They should be warned against wasting their time and strength unduly, while wandering 'among the groves of singing pine trees' and 'by the pleasant water courses' of early life; their strength should be conserved for 'the long road and the lonesome valley' and the dreary mountain climb at the end! Then not all of life that is worth while will be condensed in the few short years, which only tends to accentuate the bleakness of the rest.

"I have found out if one would have winter flowers preparations must begin in the spring and summer time."

She had fallen to musing again and Edah did not like to disturb her—at last she spoke—

"You surely would not make old people of the young?"

"Heaven forbid," replied her companion. "Youth is the time to be light-hearted, happy and gay—but the young can be all of that and at the same time be taught the meaning of duty, responsibility, righteousness, which will not in reality lessen the enjoyment of their youth, will even augment and make it brighter.

"They must learn to be interested not only in the things of *now* but in something that will do equally well for to-morrow, next year and forever."

"But can such a thing possibly be?"

“Yes, I feel sure—when the young are educated—trained in righteousness. It is going to be difficult to inaugurate, I do not deny, for the teachers will have to be able to rise above their own early training, which is, oh! so very hard!” and she sighed, thinking that her own emancipation from the education of her youth which had been acquired with so much of soul stress, had come too late to bear visible fruit in her own family.

“It seems to me the whole of life, from center to circumference—individually and collectively—will have to be reconstructed on the plane of truth, integrity, openness and honesty of purpose.

“‘To be forewarned is to be forearmed;’ and if parents and teachers would really seek to enlighten the young—would make them to understand—the toil and weariness of the ‘long road’ may be considerably lightened as well as that of the steep mountain climb at the end.

“The hope, courage and dare of the young when combined with the experience of the old, might work wonders. But so often—in fact nearly always—they are like the friend of my young days, who, when her mother begged her not to pursue a certain course of action saying, ‘listen to me Sarah—I know—I’ve had experience in such matters,’ replied, ‘I understand mother, but I want my own experience!’

“What can one expect when we read such counsel as I came across the other day. A popular author gives it as his opinion that three years is the extent of the life of that wild infatuation which is usually supposed to herald the approach of marriage and become its fruition! *and that the bliss of those few years fully compensates for the lack of it during the rest of life!* Possibly he was joking,” she added, “but it is a grim sort of humor.

“I, myself, should think that last statement depends

largely upon whether the rest of life were full of bickering, incompatibility and misery—a state of things which tends to dim the luster of any early romance, however ardent, and might even turn the memory of it into loathing.

“It is true that passion is, at the present time, the foundation of marriage; and the contracting parties awaken after a time in surprise and consternation to find a life of diplomacy—strategy—and manipulation awaiting them instead of one founded upon friendship—comradeship—built upon mutual confidence and respect.

“But if this writer has set the time limit correctly to that intoxicating period, is it not up to us who are old—who have had the experience and know—to save the young from such a rude awakening? Warnings may not be heeded—but very early unions, before the fiery imagination has gotten in its deadly work would help immensely. But—” and she added ruefully—“there comes in the question of economics. Under our present false system very few young men are fitted to embark on matrimonial seas at an early age.” Adding vehemently—

“If our civilization precludes a righteous life then let it be torn to shreds and tatters and the fragments scattered to the four winds. We may preach ‘let us do evil that good may come,’ both by precept and example till the end of time but not a fraction of an ounce of good will ever come of it.

“Our whole miserable system of life is teetotally, absolutely and altogether wrong;” she said with emphasis, and her face gave evidence of the deep feeling within.

She had almost forgotten the presence of anyone save herself, and continued her monologue, looking out over the water with unseeing eyes.

“I am not, like some, surprised at the increasing

marital unrest; I fail to see how we could logically expect anything else. God knew poor miserable humanity far better than it knows itself, when He said, by the sweat of his brow and in toil should man eat bread and the woman should in sorrow and trouble bear children.

"So long as both were obedient to the law of their natures, whether natural or made so as a result of their evil doing, it matters not—all went comparatively well. They had a community of interest and lived their lives together in mutual help and sympathy:—lives which of course were full of hardship and with sorrows and griefs as well, but from which they could not wholly expect to escape.

"After a time there came a change and the man high up in the social scale concluded he did not have to toil and sweat! He would eat once again of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, *this time of his own volition!* So he repudiated his birthright—substituting athletics, games and outdoor sports in place of the necessary toil—so causing the work of the world to be done by a *part* of its family instead of all, thus doubling their portion.

"And now the woman says to her Maker, 'the man whom thou hast given me has tempted me and I no longer will bear children in suffering and in sorrow.' So she has taken the bit in her teeth and is going hell-bent as fast as any man, and I dare say will 'beat him to it!'

"Pardon the language, but nothing else seems adequate," she interpolated. "But I suppose,"—reflectively—"when soul speaks to soul one's English does not so much matter."

Taking up the thread of her discourse, "and now these two poor deluded creatures, who have 'sold their birthright for a mess of pottage' thinking to

escape their destiny, are sweating far more in the way of their own choosing.

“If people could only see and understand that they must reorganize the present conditions of marriage in such a way that each may develop along his or her own lines—which may indeed land them very widely apart, no matter how congenial they might have been at their union. While such a result might not be quite unexpected it can be worked out far more happily than is possible under the present regime.

“Out of the boundless liberty everyone craves for himself, each—both,—could be free to *voluntarily give up all*—make a complete sacrifice when the sorrows of another or the woes of the world made an appeal.

“The most precious word in the English language or its equivalent in any tongue— is FREEDOM! LIBERTY! to receive the reward of right action, or suffer the penalty of disobedience, without the intervention of man-made laws.”

The words were uttered with an intensity of feeling which left no doubt in her hearer's mind of their vital interest to the speaker.

After a little pause—“But I am wandering—

“So long as woman was loving, submissive and trusting, content to lose her personality in that of her husband—all went better. But she has learned to see that she, too, is an individual and as such is responsible to her Maker for the ‘deeds done in the body.’

“It seems to me all laws respecting marriage should be done away with, saving only the one ‘spoken by the mouth of the Lord.’ Each should be free along all other lines, but never, *never* should either transgress the law of their union.

“Once men and women were necessary to each other—the nature of the woman was a complement

to the man—it needed the two to round out and perfect each. But things are different now,” and she sighed.

“The man no longer stands in need of a helpmeet. His well-appointed and luxurious club does for him instead of a home, and a house of prostitution or an accommodating friend serves him instead of a wife. So he is enabled to take his leisure in selecting a woman to share his name who will bring him prestige, wealth or position—perhaps all three—unless peradventure he falls a victim to the machinations of a clever and designing mamma.”

Once Edah would have been shocked at such a statement—would have refuted it stoutly, but her own experience left her small room for skepticism.

The speaker interrupted herself to say, “what a long sleep the dear child is taking! it must be getting late.”

Edah glanced at her watch, “why, so it is—after one! I’ll set our lunch at once and then if he is not awake I’ll awaken him.”

When the simple preparations were completed she glanced in the direction of the sleeping boy, and there he lay wide awake, looking at her with his merry blue eyes.

She caught him up and hugged him close—close—struggling to keep back the tears and a little sob that would come. “The clouds seemed to be clustering less darkly above that sunny little head—life might yet hold something in store for him, and so for her.”

As they ate, the minds of both were full of the deep thoughts and disclosures of the morning, and the meal was more or less silent;—the reactionary silence that comes after two people have laid bare the innermost thoughts of the heart.

After Robert had gone joyously down to the beach

with his small pail and shovel, and the remains of the feast had been cleared away, Edah took her sewing, asking as she seated herself, "Did I understand you to say you do not believe in marriage as understood by the world? Would you do away with all religious or civil ceremony?"

"Everything which tends to hamper the freedom or restrain the liberty of the individual is an evil and must be eliminated. All organizations, the marital as well, are controlled in one of two ways; either by a filibustering minority or an orthodox majority. The 'I will' and 'I won't' of one or other of the two partners is oftentimes quite sufficient to roll up a large plurality."

Edah smiled, but her friend went on—"Many a two-by-four head has been known to dictate to and dominate one that was six-by-eight. I once heard a person say she'd rather make a failure of life and follow her own leadings than achieve success through the dictates of another. I, myself, should scorn to coerce another with the same intensity I feel when I'm the victim.

"Do you know," and her voice fell almost to a whisper, "many a peaceful minority has been obliged to sacrifice *convictions of right* to the esthetic feelings or ideas of the proper conventions, traditions or etiquette of the ruling element!"

She paused in sad contemplation of some picture thus suddenly brought to her mind.

Presently she roused herself to say with some vehemence—

"There is one truth at the base of all my convictions—if *people are individually responsible then they must be individually free!*

"We are husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters but *first and foremost* we are

individuals, with a life to account for, for whom no one else is responsible in the living!

"I cannot possibly think for one moment that God ever bound a person hand and foot and then commanded him to run a race. if we are bound it is of our own doing.

"But," and she paused a moment in reflection, "I think I see the dawn of a great and glorious day wherein each—both—everyone will have perfect and absolute freedom and liberty of action.

"By that I do not mean license for the gratification of personal desires; but it may be," she added more slowly, "we will first pass through those turbulent waters where the abuse of individual liberty runs riot before we really and truly realize 'that whatsoever one soweth *that* shall he also reap.'

"The time is coming—may even be now"—and she paused with the greatness of the thought, "when as the apostle says, 'there will be, neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond or free!' whether or not the time is ripe for conformity to such a high and lofty ideal, I cannot say; one thing is sure,—it is certainly imperative upon him who sees it so, but for those who have already been joined in wedlock—it is not for them," and she fell into a sad reverie.

"But," said Edah, referring to her previous remark, "if all law and restraint were done away with, would it not lead to terrible wickedness? would not our very lives be in danger?"

"Oh, my dear, I never thought for a moment of doing away with all law! I couldn't if I would, and I wouldn't if I could! God's laws are quite sufficient for all governing, if we would only stand aside and give them a chance for full and perfect operation. They work with unerring accuracy and no one need fear an unjust sentence.

"I think all people, if given the opportunity, would

feel as did David of old when he chose to fall into the hands of an offended God rather than into those of his enemies."

She paused a moment while a smile spread over her features—"I am minded of a circumstance in my own experience which might serve as an illustration. The small child of a friend had broken one of the rules of her governing—been disobedient or naughty in some way—and when told by her mother she would have to be punished cried out hastily and in considerable alarm, 'let father spank her—let father spank her, he knows how.'"

Edah, much amused, admitted it was a good illustration.

Sobering, Mrs. Williams went on with her argument—

"Of course I cannot say what, neither do I feel called upon to map out, the method of procedure the Heavenly Ruler would take were the reins of government entirely given into His Hands. But I have a strong conviction that were we only humbly obedient—without any preconcerted effort on our part—everything would fall into place like magic,—like the touching of a button starts all the machinery of a great exposition working and illumines the vast buildings with a sudden burst of light.

"I think most of us believe that God can make even our wrath and disobedience redound to His praise, but how much better it would be for *us* if He could have our co-operation.

"How do we know that the assassin's knife or bullet might not be intended by a merciful Providence to save some of us from going the cancerous or tubercular route?

"It is ours to obey regardless of consequences! but alas my convictions are one thing and my life quite another!" and a deep gloom settled down upon her and she said no more.

Edah arose and went for a little play with her boy who had tired of his well-digging and was running with Jack in and out among the large trees.

As the quartette were slowly returning homeward, Mrs. Williams said, "There is a little verse running in my mind that I want you to know, it is so sweet and comforting. I intend having it done in illuminated script along with another one or two which I am going to give you."

"It is so good of you," murmured the girl, "rest assured it will be appreciated."

"The lines are these—

"Every day is a fresh beginning
Listen my soul to the glad refrain—
And spite of old sorrow, and older sinning
And puzzles forcasted and possible pain,
Take heart with the day and begin again."

"Now if you have anything especially prized and dear to you I will be glad to have it done at the same time: they make nice soul pictures to hang on other than 'memory's walls.' If these choice things are not convenient to the outward eye sometimes they get hidden or obscured amid the heart's perplexities and grief's."

"Yes," said Edah slowly, "there is one I prize—I cannot tell you how much—it is this:

"We can suffer, may even die, but we *must do right!*" and she told her friend the story of that little line fraught with so much meaning to her.

As they came to the parting of the ways they paused a while as if loath to separate, while Robert and his dog ran on ahead the short distance home.

"Once again I tell you," said the elder woman, "I almost envy you,—you who are so free in every way to follow your own convictions."

Edah bowed her head while a warm wave of gladness flooded her being—"this friend knew all and yet could envy her!"

"Do you know, my dear,"—clasping her hand in parting, "I think it would be such a noble work for you to take some poor, motherless, friendless little orphan to raise up with your own dear boy. It would fill in and cheer your lonely life and be the best thing you could possibly do for Robert, not to mention the untold benefit to the homeless one.

"If I could only make everyone see the great,—literally the crying—need of poor, forlorn, deserted little ones for mothers! not for orphan asylums, but for *mothers* to love, cherish and train! No woman is large enough to tuck fifty or one hundred little ones under the wings of her love—God never meant them to try—hence the limitations.

"But she can mother eight—ten—or a dozen—and think how far-reaching her example might be!" and her face glowed with absorbing earnestness.

"No one can measure the influence of a single human life! If only the mothers of the land, whose children are grown and fled—who have large experience—could see the immense good they might do both for themselves and humanity at large and these little waifs in particular, what wonderful things might not be accomplished!

"But alas, alas!" sadly shaking her head, "we are all of us bound hand and foot by conventions—traditions—economic conditions—!"

She paused unable to proceed. When she again spoke she said, "To-morrow is letter-day, and there are other things as well to keep me home, so good-bye, my dear, dear friend—may you find peace and comfort to your storm-tossed soul is my sincerest wish."

With a final pressure she relinquished the parting hand-clasp and bent her steps homeward, while Edah walked thoughtfully up the narrow little street.

New and strange thoughts came rolling and tumbling through Edah's brain as she sat in front of her open wood fire that night.

"Can it be true that *he* is really my lawful husband? Why was I not so taught from a child? Why does not everyone know?"

And out of the quiet of the room she could almost hear the sound of a Voice—"Behold I have hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes,"—

"Sweet, simple, humble-minded people like her friend."

In the language made famous by another Edah said in spirit, "almost thou persuadest me!"

And her small clock ticked away the hours and the fire died out while she sat re-adjusting the unused and broken-down wireless mechanism of her soul to once again catch those lofty messages floating from on High, which of recent years had soared so far, far above her head.

The darkness of her Egyptian night was ended and like the "Watchman upon the walls of Zion" she already discerned the signs of "breaking day."

She arose and went into their sleeping-room and stood by Robert's bed looking down with dewy eyes on that almost idolized form; then kneeling beside him her heart went out in adoration and thankfulness for boy and friend and a strange sweet peace crept into her soul.

Ever after she walked the sandy shore or trod the soft pine needles beneath the leafy trees, calm, fearless, stately—once more locking the world in the face.

The effect of her confession had been as a life-giving tonic. Her cheeks took on the glow of health and her features rounded out—dispelling the hard look that was aging her and giving back her youth.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning being bright and sunny, mother and child went alone in the boat for a long row over the sparkling waters.

She was beginning to try once again to lean on that Unseen Arm—and was trusting her darling to hold on by himself.

After rowing about some time they landed at her usual place on the Island. Edah did not busy herself with her work as usual, but lay on the clean warm sand, looking at the sky, the clouds, the water—not even thinking—mind, soul and body were enjoying a long-craved rest.

They had not been there long when the atmosphere assumed a hazy appearance and soon a heavy fog set in.

Edah was seized with consternation, and hastened her preparations to depart, feeling considerable trepidation over the prospect of rowing across the path of so many sea-craft in the gathering gloom.

The trip was made in safety, however, but it was their last outing for several days.

It rained hard and it rained easy, but it kept raining.

Edah read the book her friend had loaned her—played with and amused Robert and worked industriously between times getting her own and Robert's things in order, for their future began to take definite shape in her mind. While it was only dim and hazy as yet, it was not chaotic.

It being the last of February—when the sun shone and the wind was in a favorable quarter they did not even need extra wraps when walking—but as was usual after a spell of rainy weather it had cleared off cold.

The first clear morning Edah opened the door in answer to a rap and there stood her friend.

“I just had to come and see you, and was afraid you would be gone out did I not come early,” looking into the brown, expressive eyes which met her gaze with a new meaning in them.

It was their first meeting since their memorable talk a week before.

Robert was overjoyed, and Edah's welcome left no room for doubt in her friend's mind of its sincerity.

“Robert and I were not going out this morning, but you can probably guess where we would have gone the very first thing,” placing a rocker in front of the fire and helping her off with her things.

“I appear to have gotten into the sewing habit and don't seem able to leave off,” laughing as she glanced at the confusion in the room;—sheets cut off ready for hemming and tablecloths and napkins in the same state of preparation.

“It certainly does look like business—lucky I came! I'm a good helper if you can provide the tools.”

Edah put on Robert's wraps and sent him into the yard to play with Jack and soon the two women were busily chatting and working.

“Did you read the book?”

“I certainly did, and found it so good, so wonderfully good; I was going to say especially the first essay, but really one cannot make a choice.”

“I was sure you would enjoy it—I don't see how it can fail to interest all;—it is so simple and straightforward and gets at the very root of things in the most direct way. I consider the author, Tolstoy, one

of the great, monumental personages of this or any other century."

Gradually the talk drifted into a lighter vein and many topics were briefly touched upon and considered in a desultory way as women will when busy together.

"I was interested and annoyed at the same time," said the elder, "over an incident which occurred in the car I came down in: two small boys,—there were three in the party—were sitting together and one on the arm of the seat. The boy next the window had seized the cap belonging to the outside chap and thrown it on the floor and had his foot on it; the owner was fussing around, making considerable noise although good-naturedly, in his efforts to get it.

"Presently along came the conductor and gave the noisy boy's hair a vicious pull, telling him in rough, brutal tones to 'make less noise and behave himself.'

"Now, the real culprit was the still chap who was imposing on the other; and I thought, how much like most of the punishment meted out in the world of grown-ups."

"It was a mean thing," said Edah, who was quick to resent an injustice, especially to a child. "Just wait till women get the reins of government into their hands, and see how quickly unfairness will be done away with!"

Her friend smiled—"I'm skeptical about that."

"Why—aren't you a believer in equal rights?"

"Well, I certainly do think with all my heart that 'what is fair for one is fair for all'—and if the women really want suffrage, I suppose they should have it.

"However, I'm not one of those women who think they are so much wiser, better, and more capable than the men who have handled the political situation all these years—and all one has to do is to look about and

see the mess they've made of things! to me it is a horrible object lesson! a warning to keep out!!

"Besides, I do not think for one moment that we can ever legislate righteousness into the world, it matters not who tries.

"Not laws; she softly repeated, but virtue in the soul we need,

The old Socratic justice in the heart,
The golden rule becomes the people's creed
When years of training have performed their part;
For thus alone in home and church and mart
Can evil perish and the race be freed."

"But," she added, "I dare say the main-spring of the agitation among women is their desire for economic freedom, which I think myself is the root of the matter, but one has only to look at the large majority of men, when it comes to actual numbers—who have all their lives voted and have they economic freedom? No! and I fear they never will have through the ballot."

"I'm afraid your outlook would seem hopeless, to the poor women agitators; but you must have some remedy in mind?"

"I would let it work itself out in this way?"

"See that the young are taught to be mindful of his or her own actions, *only*, leaving everyone else free to do the same, and in a generation or two, the people, not being educated—trained into a traditional habit of mind that knows only the continuance of present conditions, will be able to formulate something far ahead of anything the world has ever seen or even dreamed of.

"Of course everyone brands the idea of such a method as suicidal—criminal—anarchic—but it is what I believe nevertheless."

She paused and her hands fell idly in her lap while her eyes took on a far-away look.

“The whole matter of politics brings to my mind a picture like this;—Across a barren waste of sandy desert, a long line of weary pilgrims are traveling in the dust and heat. In the foreground a great concourse of famishing people are gathering about a well, the waters of which are bitter. One suggests throwing in this remedy, someone else that, another loosens his pack and looks for an herb that he is confident will sweeten and make palatable the Marah-like water: a third has still another remedy, and so the men keep on trying to neutralize the unpleasant taste by every means in their power.

“A little farther along on the other side of the road, under a canopied top, there bubbles up a spring of living water, cool and clear as crystal, on the curbing of which sits One like unto the Son of man.

“Above His head on the front of the canopy roof might be read in large shining letters the Golden Rule. On one of the uprights are the words, ‘Resist not Evil’ and on another, ‘Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself.’

“But, oh! so few see this free life-giving spring! It should have been discovered long since and I think the time not far distant when its waters will be freely drunk by all nations.”

As she remained silent Edah asked—

“Do you think the world is growing better?”

“Is it getting less selfish? If you can tell me that, you will be able to answer your own question: for it was selfishness that was the crying evil in the day of Christ, against which His teachings were mainly directed—and it still continues to be.

“But people have such a very fine way of reasoning nowadays that the word selfishness has come to mean the same whether one desires to direct all his

thoughts and energies upon self or upon others—although the results are as night to day.

“Self-less-ness is perhaps a better word to use.

“We have not been informed as to times and seasons, but one thing is evident—we are certainly two thousand years nearer ‘that great and notable day of the Lord’ than when Jesus walked and talked in Galilee.”

She was silent a moment and her features took on a heaven-born look.

“A train is being laid by Religion, Science and Art that is to fire the charge that will blast the great rock which blocks the way to Paradise, and simple, child-like obedience to the great and shining Golden Rule is the spark that will ignite the whole.

“Then shall the mountains break forth into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands and from the four corners of the earth will go up a mighty shout ‘The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth.’”

She ceased speaking and an expectant silence filled the room—as of a silence preceding the triumphant clashing of cymbals—the joyful burst of sounds proclaiming that same, “Great and Notable Day.”

Mrs. Williams began folding up her work preparatory to leaving—

“I’ve not accomplished very much”—looking rather ruefully about her.

“More than you will ever know!” clasping the dear wrinkled hand.

“It is going to warm up in a day or two, so suppose we plan our talked-of trip to the west of town for the first pleasant day?”

“By all means.”

What both were thinking yet neither felt like saying was—“that separation time was coming soon.”

After their late dinner Edah said, as she took down their sweaters, "Come Robsy-Bobsy we're going for a walk!"

Robert looked up in wonder into his mother's face—then began laughing at the new funny name, trying to say it after her.

They walked back through the woods at a lively gait for the wind was chilly and penetrating—occasionally throwing pine cones for Jack to chase—or running races in which the dog always came out ahead; and when an hour later all returned they were in high spirits from their exercise and the fresh air.

"Or was it something besides the ozone that had gotten into Edah's blood?" she said to herself, "one swallow does not make a Spring" but—"there may be other swallows later if there is a season of depression between."

"It seemed too good to be true that she was so light-hearted and happy:" She chided herself for the thought—"I shan't cross any more bridges until I come to them!"

Two or three days later the little party alighted from the car at Hearts-ease Park with work-bags, bundles and all the paraphernalia for picnicing.

There was really no special park there; the place must have been named by someone who had found rest, peace and tranquillity among Nature's quiet beauties and to show his or her appreciation had bestowed the pleasant-sounding name.

"I never saw anyone grow like Robert," said Mrs. Williams as the child ran on ahead of them.

"Yes," replied his mother, "I can almost notice it from day to day myself. I've just been returning some things I ordered from New York, with the request for five-year-old sizes instead, and you know he won't be four until July."

Walking westward from the cluster of houses constituting the station, they came upon a knoll of high ground with fine old trees of oak, pine, magnolia, gum, bay and some magnificent dogwoods in full flower.

"How very beautiful!" exclaimed Edah—"Like a great mound of snow! I think we will camp right here in sight of this, the queen of them all."

So they arranged themselves accordingly after gathering a few branches to enjoy for a time at close range.

When Robert slept his mother sat beside him, listening to the songs of the mocking-birds in the trees, announcing joyously that Spring was at hand; to the sound of the far-away lapping of the water on the sandy beach, and the rustling of the leaves overhead; sounds which augmented the deep peace in her soul.

Edah broke the long silence by asking softly, "Do you remember saying you would tell me sometime of the change in your religious views?"

"Yes,—I remember, and if you like I will tell you something of it now."

She settled herself comfortably with her work:

"I was raised in an orthodox church and atmosphere and for many years it was satisfying, and might be yet, for orthodoxy has all the religious teaching that anyone can have, or needs; the only trouble is most of the essentials have been shorn from the plain, direct and simple teachings of Christ.

"I do not know how it has come about, but St. Paul has been largely substituted in His place. Now, Paul is a great and good man and a powerful writer, yet—I'm going to wait for the light of eternity to shine on the pages, before reading him further.

"If the church's adherents, I among the number, had lived up to their high and lofty privileges which

was their imperative duty as well, the great falling away which has taken place, would not have occurred—and all the new cults which are springing up everywhere, would never have been born.”

She thoughtfully paused.

“It is really a time of great distress, when one finds his or her feet slipping off the old foundation and not yet able to ‘touch bottom,’—at least so it was with me.

“After months,—nay years—when I found at last safe anchorage I discovered I was not after all so very far from my starting point. I had emptied my faith receptacle and when it was refilled the contents were not so very different;—my creed was only slightly changed.

“I still believe in God, the Creator of the Universe and Author of my being—in the Word made Flesh—and in the great Church Invisible where those belong who obey.”

She sat so long a time silent looking out over the rippling water that her companion softly asked—

“Do you believe in evolution?”

“I am only an unlearned old woman, whose life has been spent with family cares and duties—giving little time for reading or investigation of any sort, till my beliefs were formulated—and as they are soul-satisfying to the last degree, I’m not much interested in the ‘whence came we,’ and ‘whither are we going,’ so much as the ‘what are we here for’ proposition.

“Everything may have come from an atom or protoplasm for aught I know, but the wonderful possibilities or potentialities of the same lead me to think of a Great Intelligent First Cause which we might as well call GOD.

“I remember being greatly distressed during this uncertain time I speak of—this time of doubt and depression—by some of the different ‘cults’ which passed in review before my perplexed soul.

“One day I sat turning the leaves of my bible—the pages fell apart and I began desultorily reading; the first thing my eyes lighted upon were the words, ‘Can’st thou by searching find out God?’

“It spake to me with the reality of a Voice. I stopped searching then and there,—only with the eye of faith.

“I’m inclined to believe, as the bible says, that we are made in the image of God. As he is Triune—so are we—Intelligent, Affectionate and with a Will to act. Our bodies really may have been a long time in the process of evolution from an atom to a monkey. The ‘*how*’ or ‘*why*’ of it really does not interest me now;—that can be gone into on the ‘other side Jordan’s wave;’—but the ‘*what*’ to do with this little life is so important, so vital, that it crowds out all else.

“I never bother about death and the hereafter—that is God’s end of the business—ours is the ‘here’ and ‘now,’ which rightly considered is so vast, so momentous, so far-reaching as to fill our days.

“When my feet were once more planted on the Rock of Conviction I realized with grief and sorrow that my children were crystallized in the way of their early training and neither could my dear husband see things from my altered angle of vision.

“It was during those dark days I was called upon to give up a beloved child—and it was out of the clouds and storms of that tempestuous time that God spake to my soul.

“Life held a new and wondrous meaning. Henceforward the Golden Rule of His revealing was to shine with a fresh and radiant luster.

“Then was born my great and absorbing desire to gather the little motherless children in my arms and to my heart; smooth from their pathway the brambles and briars where possible, and help them to bear it when not.”

She shook her head, "but it never can be, and I am now in the sad miserable state of one living a life diametrically opposed to her convictions.

"Ere long I shall come a weary pilgrim, knocking at Heaven's gate; a Voice, stern and reproachful shall ask, 'heard'st thou not the cries of these my orphan children in their hunger, cold and distress?' and I can only make reply, 'Lord thou knowest I have been so busy getting new gowns and doing fancy-work—taking care of hard-wood floors and playing Bridge!

"And the sentence shall fall, 'Thine ears shall not be closed to those echoing cries throughout the long ages!'" and she clasped her head in her hands as if to shut out that awful sound.

Impulsively Edah threw her arms about her friend and pressed her young cheek close to hers.

"Oh, my dear, dear Mrs. Williams! you who do so much good in the world! think what you have been to me! if God is a God of Love you will surely hear those words of commendation—'She hath done what she could.'" And their tears mingled together.

After that both women sat silent—thinking the deep thoughts of God.

Robert wakened crying because of a bad dream—a thing so very unusual. His mother soothed and cuddled him in her arms till he slept again;—and once more all was still save the sounds of nature in that beautiful retreat.

Edah, looking down with love-shining eyes upon the precious burden in her arms and noting his rhythmical breathing and healthful color added thankfulness to her feelings of adoration.

When he next roused up, full of life and merriment, they made ready to depart; each heart, though in a different way, too full for speech. One with a dawning hope of a new life, the other sorrowful and despairing because of the tangled thicket from which she could not extricate herself.

CHAPTER X.

SOME little time after their day at Heart-ease Park the friends found themselves once again in their much-loved spot on the Point.

Jack, the pet and plaything and source of much infantile delight, was missing; some heartless person had stolen him a few days before and no trace had been found, although Edah made diligent search.

Robert was inconsolable for a time, but he was young and the forgetting did not take so long, although he used to surprise his mother by speaking of him at intervals long after.

The friends had again been talking of matters educational as they came along; a subject so very important in the eyes of the elder woman.

"Not in respect to book learning," she said, "but in the matter of morals and right living. The teaching that is to elevate the human race in their ideas, aims and purposes—beginning of course with the young if anything effective is to be accomplished.

"There is," she said, "a branch of the child's education that has been terribly neglected, or done all wrong, like so much else, and we are reaping a wretched harvest.

"He should early be taught to know himself *as he is*—to see things *as they are*! Untruthfulness and deception have never been productive of good.

"Evil, especially the social crime, flourishes—grows strong and waxes mighty in the dense, dank shade of secretiveness.

"Wth an impressive Sh-h-h!! and a finger on its

lips the world has persistently worked into the hands of the foe and few of us are guiltless.

"We should have known at once that when the sentence of silence was pronounced by the world it was our imperative duty to look up and down—fore and aft and underneath the situation.

"We should never let the child be kept guessing.

"I really cannot say how much of the great social wrong of our time can be laid at the door of ignorance—but I am sure it must have to bear a large proportion of blame!"

"Oh," sighed Edah, "There is so very, very much that needs rectifying or regulating in this world of ours!"

"Yes; while we are advancing along some lines we are retrograding along others."

"Well"—with decision—"my mind is quite made up at last! I shall take Robert somewhere into the country to raise up—near to Nature and Nature's God—doing the best I can to keep him pure and honest;—teaching him to work with his hands as I expect to do and together we'll help bear the burdens of the sorrowing and distressed with whom our lot is cast,—as you have helped me"—and she gave her friend a look of gratitude and love.

"It is a glorious work and I wish you God-speed—would I were going to be with you!" and her lip trembled.

Edah could only clasp her friend's two hands in her own and hold them fast—not trusting herself to speak.

Presently, "Did you say you must return early? If so," glancing at the time, "I'll have our lunch at once."

As her friend made ready to depart Edah said—

"The day is so fine and Robert is so happy here I think I will remain a while longer."

"Do so by all means, I'm only sorry I can't be with you."

Edah walked a short distance with her toward the car line—then busied herself with her work till Robert awakened.

After he had eaten and the lunch things been cleared away, hatless and coatless they played together on the beach and in the woods, hiding—running—laughing as gay and lighthearted as two children could be.

"Now, mothey's tired;—besides she must get to work. You take your shovel and dig a well and mothey will come look at it when it's done."

So he trudged off, his golden curls bobbing in the sun as he walked.

Edah sat with her back against a large tree trunk and watched him: before he had finished his well, his eye caught sight of a brown squirrel running along on the ground. He gave chase and it ran up a live-oak tree, flirting its graceful red-brown tail, as much as to say, 'catch me if you can.'

He stood absolutely motionless, looking up with head thrown back, watching for its reappearance.

Edah gazed with adoring eyes, letting her work and hands fall into her lap and wishing she had not forgotten her kodak.

Presently she became conscious of a presence—not that she had heard anything—but she felt someone was near. With scarcely a motion of her head she turned her eyes and saw something which paralyzed her with fear.

She could move neither hand nor foot—all power of action seemed gone.

There stood James Maxwell! looking pale and ill with an expression on his face as near akin to fear as ever sat those resolute features.

He was gazing fixedly at the motionless child.

He had seen what he supposed was a vision, so like

was he to little Jamie, his sister's dead boy—and had been drawn step by step—silently—fascinated and charmed as a bird by the fatal snake—until the three made almost a right-angle triangle with the hypotenuse between mother and child.

“There 'ee is, mothey, I see 'ees tail!”

At the first word the spell was broken and simultaneously:

“Jamie!”

“Robert!” fell from their respective lips.

The latter name was spoken so sharply the child looked around in wonder, almost ready to cry. Seeing a stranger he ran to his mother, who was now standing, and took her outstretched hand.

At sound of Edah's exclamation James Maxwell turned and saw her for the first time.

He removed his hat and advanced a step—“*Mrs. Brown—you here?*”

Edah bowed her head slightly;—she was trembling so she could scarcely stand, but she held Robert's hand closely clasped in hers.

He caught a fleeting glimpse of the fear approaching to terror in her lovely brown eyes ere their gaze was lowered to the ground where it remained during the rest of the interview.

The picture she made as she stood tall and motionless, with the sunlight filtering through the branches—flecking her tumbled hair of brown and gold—with her beautiful boy by her side remained to haunt James Maxwell long after.

Simultaneously with his sight of her—as with a flash of lightning—his comprehension had received enlightenment. He understood that the child both had been gazing upon, was her boy and his!!

Deep and conflicting emotions filled his breast.

Softened by the supposed vision of his dead nephew he spoke with much feeling—

"Mrs. Brown," he repeated, "I have a confession I wish to make—one that I had thought would die with me!"

He paused a moment to frame suitable words for what he had to say—for he was laboring under great mental excitement—having come South to check a threatened nervous break-down.

Edah stood pale and motionless, rooted to the spot.

"A friend and myself had been studying and experimenting with hypnotism, and—and—you were the victim.

"You were under hypnotic influence that night!"

She went a dusky red even to the roots of her hair which faded to paleness 'neath her sun-brown tan.

"If this tardy confession will relieve your feelings I am glad it is made. I have suffered—the devil knows—will probably continue to suffer, for that crime of my life."

Up to that time he had always thought himself very honorable and upright—fully as good as other men: until then he had bought in the open market, and paid the price asked in the coin of the realm—giving never a thought to the poor, wretched creatures, whom he and others of his kind have condemned to a miserable, degraded servitude, not to mention the enormous yearly sacrifice of life to the Moloch of man's bestiality!

As he turned to leave—"Robert!"—looking down at the child—"I hope in the years to come you may be able to make up to your mother for some of the wrong and suffering imposed upon her by another."

With a respectful bow—which Edah did not see—he walked away, with something less of the old, quick, decisive manner in his gait.

When he was gone Edah sank to the ground—straining her boy to her breast.

“He shan’t have you, my darling! My love! my life!” she whispered fiercely.

Robert began to cry, he did not know why, only that “mothey” was different!

It settled Edah at once—and with a great effort she was Robert’s normal mother once more.

Taking her handkerchief, “Let mothey wipe the tears and then we will hurry home; we will ride on the car and get there quick, quick!”

Things were hastily put together and a brisk walk brought them to the car-line.

Edah looked to see if *he* were waiting there, but no one was in sight.

With a breath of thankfulness she put Robert on the car and took her seat beside him.

When she reached home she wrote a note to her friend and despatched Susie with it while she sat down to the dinner-table—not to eat—but to wait on her boy.

When the maid returned Edah looked inquiringly at her.

“Mis Williams said tell you she would come soon.”

When that lady arrived a little later she found Edah on her knees before a partly packed trunk, while all the drawers in the house were open and the bed piled full of things.

“Why, Edah, child, what are you doing! what has happened?” looking about the room and noting her excited appearance.

“Oh, my dear Mrs. Williams something very terrible!” and she drew a low rocker to her side for her friend’s use——

“Sit here close to me and I’ll tell you all about it—But where—where is Robert!” an expression of fear covering her face as she started to rise. At that moment he came in from the other room carrying an armful of things which he let fall at his mother’s feet.

Edah called Susie to lock the two outside doors and again seated herself—back up against the trunk and her hands clasping one knee.

A bright red spot burned in either cheek and her eyes glowed with a deep luminous intensity.

She began her story, speaking in a rapid, excited manner—

“Robert wakened not long after you left and had his lunch and we played together as usual, then I sat down with my work while he chased a squirrel;—presently it ran up a tree and out of sight.

“He stood watching if possible to see where it had disappeared— What was that!” in a frightened whisper, grasping her friend’s arm.

“I did not hear anything, dear.”

In a terrified whisper—“I think there is someone at the door!”

Mrs. Williams went to both doors—“No, there is no one,” and came and sat again wondering in a distressed way what it could all mean.

Edah continued her story—“Robert stood there absolutely motionless, looking perfectly beautiful with his dear, curly head thrown back, and of course I sat admiring the picture and wishing for my kodak.”

She paused a moment while a tender look of memory crept over her features; it was only fleeting and passed as she went on with her narrative.

“You know how one feels when either an animal or person comes unawares into your presence? Well, that feeling came over me so strongly that I felt quite nervous and frightened. I turned my eyes without moving my body and what—whom—do you suppose I saw? *Him!* he was looking pale and tense, almost with fear at the child.

“The sight simply paralyzed me! I could neither move nor speak!

"I really expected to see him spirit the child away before my very eyes!

"His sister once told me he was very fond of children—especially of her little dead boy—and do you know I think he imagined he was gazing on the spirit form of little Jamie—for I'm sure he said 'Jamie' as I called 'Robert,' after the child had first broken the spell."

When she finished her recital she was very much agitated.

"Now, I am going to take Robert away from here as soon as possible. Do you think you could stay all night with me?"

"Of course I can and will. Let me speak to Susie before she leaves—she can take a note to Mr. Williams—and I will help you with your packing if you still think best to go: but I don't believe this man wants Robert."

"I'm sure of it: I'm so uneasy I would never have a peaceful moment here—I wonder if I ever will again?" and she looked imploringly at her friend—but without waiting for a reply she went on;—

"I can't get ready to leave to-night; but I must get off to-morrow."

"But where, my dear; have you thought?"

"No! I want you to help me think;—I feel dazed," and she brushed her hand across her eyes.

"I'll be so glad to do that or anything else," piling the plunder on the bed over to the back as she spoke;—

"Now you lie here just a few minutes while we talk."

She smoothed the dear child's forehead and hair and gently patted the beloved hands;—soon from Edah's closed eyes a tear or two trickled down.

She buried her face in the pillow and when she could command her voice—"He said I was hypnotized that—that awful night!" and she shuddered. "Once

that would have given me infinite relief to know, but since you have said he is my husband, it does not matter so much."

"Can you not see it, too, dear?"

"Yes—I—think I do—how could it be any other way?" but her mind soon reverted to the present and she fell to thinking of what lay before her.

"It is almost too early to risk taking Robert very far north yet—I had thought to spend two or three weeks at some small place in Alabama—then if you'll give me the address of that town in Missouri we were speaking of the other day, I will go see it, anyway."

After Mrs. Williams had made Edah a cup of tea and piece of toast and had the satisfaction of seeing her eat it—the packing went on.

But Edah allowed her friend—after promising to stay right with her until she left,—to talk her out of trying to get off the next day.

Both were so busy they did not have time to feel the full force of the impending separation; but when all was ready and the hack stood waiting at the door and the adieux were to be said it was a sad moment for both.

Edah clasped her beloved friend in her arms—winking back the tears—"However can I go away from you! you who have shown me the way of life—restored hope and opened again the flood-gates of love!"

"Of course you will miss me," returning the embrace, "but I shall not be needed. You will always have God and yourself—and that combined with your busy life will be the beginning of Heaven on earth.

"It is I who am the great loser. You are going out into the beginning of a new life filled with the great purpose of living for Him; while I remain with life so near ended—and no prospect of filling in the

days with followed convictions—and with my soul's counterpart gone!”

Edah lifted her head and dried her eyes—she must turn comforter.

“Don't you see I'm going to try and fulfill your dream of obedience and duty;—I'm to be your substitute! Perhaps God saw it was better that way. May I be worthy,” she softly murmured.

A last embrace and the parting was over.

CHAPTER XI.

PEACE HILL, MO., MAY 1ST.

Mr. M. A. Van Alan,

Dear Uncle:

This is from your repentant and sorrowful niece who has been apparently so long neglectful and unmindful of you.

But please believe, dear uncle, it has only seemed that way;—for deep down in my heart I could never forget your loving kindness in the days that are gone, nor my appreciation of the same.

I know you must have heard of the great blight that has spread over my life—or at least I used so to consider it—but now in a newer and higher outlook I can lift my head with never a feeling of shame—with even hope, joy and anticipation shining ahead.

The Master has called and I hasten to obey.

My life in its entirety I dedicate to Him. It is a life that perhaps could not be understood by many of my old-time friends—and will be spent among the humble and lowly of earth in doing what little I can to lessen their burdens and help them to see that there is joy in living.

I am about to purchase the little house in which I am writing this,—where I am living with my bright and beautiful little son Robert.

If you care to give me your advice in the matter I shall be glad. The money left me by my dear aunt will be used in its purchase.

I am very pleased with the outlook—and think the two hard-working Swedish people from whom I'm buying—only ten acres out of their farm—are honest, straightforward people who will continue to be my very near neighbors.

Here in the midst of a beautiful farming country I hope to raise my boy to be a useful man—able to do his share in the work of the world—and from time to time will take into my heart and home other little ones who have no one to love and care for them.

A dear, dear friend in Biloxi, where I went when my boy was so ill, reached out to me a helping hand and dispelled the mist and darkness that enveloped me in their gloom.

“May she never be disappointed in me,” is my fervent prayer;— and that you may come sometime to see me and give me your blessing is the sincere wish of,

Your niece,

EDAH BROWN.

After the house, with its few acres, were her own she set about having the place remodeled a little—staying in the meantime with Eric and Lena Johnson, her neighbors, two middled-aged Swedish people whose children were married and settled on distant farms.

One thing Edah thought almost indispensable was a deep well with a wind-pump—for she must have water and a bath in her little home.

She made a large living room with plenty of windows to the south and west—back of it was the roomy kitchen and still further back she had built a screened-in porch at one end and a summer kitchen at the other: the latter was used in winter as a sort of store-room.

Across the entire side on the east was a long bedroom, with many windows—and a bath opening out

near one end into both the kitchen and bed-room. This room was next the Johnsons' and quite near.

When Mrs. Johnson saw the size of their sleeping-room she wondered—but her curiosity was still greater when she saw three, small iron beds taken in, besides the larger one for Edah's own use.

Answering her look of surprise Edah laughingly explained,—“These are for my orphan babies that I'm expecting. And now I'm going to ask Mr. Johnson to look around and get me a good cow and teach me to milk, then I think I'll be ready to live.”

Ready to live she was—and she gave herself up to the joy of the simple routine of her life.

It was not exactly methodical in the usual acceptance of the term.

When she wakened in the morning she got up—and throwing wide her cottage door drank in the beauty of the broad acres on every side: now green with the growing grain, but which she knew would later be golden—then brown and afterwards spotlessly white—and her heart would sing the words when her voice did not—“Lord in the morning will I lift up my voice.”

After those few moments of adoration she made ready their simple morning meal. It was a part of her plan that Robert should, “eat to live, and not live to eat.” Afterward there was dish-washing to be done and the house to make clean and orderly, Robert always helping.

Her furniture had been bought with an eye to simplicity in the matter of keeping it cared for and their floors had been covered snugly with linoleum for the same reason.

Mrs. Johnson had given her new neighbor lessons in the art of bread-making, butter-making, and in the proper method of doing laundry work—for Edah was

determined not to be a burden longer on the already overworked ones of earth.

“But,” she said in grave concern, “I suppose I’ll have to buy our shoes, stockings, hats, and—and—all the household furniture—and—and—garden tools! Oh, dear! There seems no way out of the dismal labyrinth!”

Edah had been thinking hard and fast the preceding weeks endeavoring to readjust her life at every point of contact and was amazed at the involved conditions which met her at every turn.

Mrs. Johnson did not fully understand, only shook her head—“Me and my old man we don’t never worry ’bout any such tang.”

So the doubts and perplexities which assailed her at every turn, she locked up in a far corner of her soul, so they might not interfere with present duties, until such a time when they should be made clear.

In this connection she loved to dwell upon one of the soul-pictures sent her by her dear friend, Mrs. Williams, soon after she was settled in her new home.

“Plain human speech, some simple law of life,
A little tillage, household arts a few,
The law of rectitude o’ercoming strife—
Things clean and sane, the simple and the true.”

She loved to dwell upon the words—they were restful and added to her feelings of tranquillity and contentment.

They were all comforting—those soul pictures;—and she arranged and hung them on the north wall of their living room—above the table where she sat and sewed—all but one, “The Prayer,” which she hung over Robert’s little bed, and which was the second thing her eyes rested upon in waking—Robert was the first.

Her friend had told her it was born amid the sor-

rows and troubles of a great grief—yet there was nothing of heart-ache in it; and Edah read the beautiful words—

“Oh! Thou, Who art from everlasting to everlasting, the same yesterday, to-day and forever—Infinite, Eternal and Unchangable in all Thy attributes of Holiness, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness and Truth,—accept the adoration of our hearts!”

“Open Thou our lips, and our mouths shall show forth Thy praise.”

“Oh! that men would praise Thee for Thy goodness and for Thy wonderful works to the children of men!”

“Thou stretchest the North out over the empty space and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Thou didst measure the waters in the hollow of Thy hand—and mete out Heaven with a span—and comprehend the dust of the Earth in a measure and weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in the balance.”

“O Lord! Thou hast done wonderful things! Thy Counsels of old are Faithfulness and Truth.”

“Thou hast been a strength to the poor; a strength to the needy in his distress, a Refuge from the storm and a Shadow from the heat.”

“Oh! that men would praise Thee for Thy Goodness and for Thy wonderful works to the children of men!”

“What is man that Thou art mindful of him or the son of man that Thou visitest him?”

“Thou didst so love the world that Thou gavest Thine Only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.”

“And now unto Thee the King, Eternal, Immortal and Invisible, the only Wise God—be Blessing and Honor and Glory and Dominion both now and evermore. Amen.”

The tears welled up in her eyes as she finished read-

ing—for the sweet beauties of the quotations and because her friend had once told her, “She loved to tell God how Great and Good He is.”

Their little neighborhood was composed of six or eight houses clustered together in the vicinity of the intersection of two roads.

When Edah first moved there one of the smaller houses was occupied by a painter, his wife and baby. He was one of the men at work on her little home, and she soon became quite well acquainted with the family.

During a spell of damp, changeable weather the baby was taken sick and Edah helped the young mother nurse him and often after he recovered, would keep him for hours at a time—relieving the mother who had expectations of another in the near future.

Edah had promised to be with her when the time came, but a few days before the expected event Dan came for her in the middle of the night. He was very much alarmed about his wife and hastened on to the one telephone in the neighborhood to summon the doctor.

Edah carried her sleeping boy into Mrs. Johnson's and ran back in the opposite direction a quarter of a mile to Dan's home.

She found the poor woman desperately ill, with their nearest neighbor pale and frightened looking helplessly on.

Edah took charge with a confidence born of experience and training and soon had an efficient helper in the woman who was incompetent to take the lead.

The doctor, with his two assistants, did all in his power, but Edah's practiced eye discerned the inevitable. She knew that Death only waited in the ante-chamber—having already set his cold, gray seal on those suffering features.

After the little girl-baby was born there was a season of hope but that soon passed away.

The dying woman fixed her eyes upon Edah with an intense, imploring look which followed her every move. The latter bent her ear low, but no sound came from those silent lips.

"Did you want to ask me to take your baby?"—tenderly—

A look of assent and resigned peacefulness took the place of the almost agonized entreaty as Edah whispered in the dulled ears, "I will keep her and love her as my very own."

"Dan!" turning to the husband who sat on a chair at the foot of the bed—face buried in his hands—"Millie wants me to keep her baby;—is it all right?"

Dan came and knelt by his wife's side and promised it should be as she wished.

Soon after she knew no more of earth's pain and sorrow and ere long had fallen into the

"Long and dreamless sleep,

From which none ever wake to weep."

Among the humble and lowly the kind hands of friends and neighbors still performed the last, sad offices incumbent at such a time and so it was here.

When all was over, at Dan's request, Edah took Danny as well as the baby to her own little home.

Somehow she had never thought of her orphans coming in that way.

Since she had been settled she had been planning to go into the city soon and select one from the asylum; and her mind was quite made up that she would take the most forlorn and unattractive baby in the whole institution—one that no one else wanted.

But this was evidently what the Lord intended for her to do at the present time.

The addition of two babies at once, thickened up the

work not a little at "Castle Industrie" as Edah loved to think of her home.

But if she was busy she was also happy.

She had begun to learn the meaning of life—service to others—and it filled her with tranquil peace and joy.

She simply lived and loved and worked the days away.

The baby was called Mildred for its mother—Dan called her Millie as he had her mother—but Edah always pronounced the full name. The two-year-old boy was Danny.

Beauty's milk agreed with the baby and she never stopped growing.

Dan gave up the little rented house where his wife died and went to live in the village, but always on Sunday he came to see his children and occasionally on stormy days during the week also.

He loved to watch Edah as she went about her work or attended the wants and needs of the children. Quietly, gently and apparently without effort, it all seemed to be accomplished.

She felt very sorry for him in his grief and loneliness—losing wife and home and being separated from his boy of whom he was very fond.

But things began to get dull in his line in the village and he got work in the adjacent city and the visits grew farther apart—often weeks intervening.

Ever since Edah had moved into her little home, if the weather was fine on Sunday—"Glory Day" as she had come to call it—she would take Robert by the hand and together they would wander to the top of the hill a half-mile distant to the village burying-ground. There she communed with God and taught her boy of Him.

It was not so easy of accomplishment now—still—often Mrs. Johnson would see Edah wheeling the

infant's go-cart, accompanied by the other two children, slowly wending their way up the hill, measuring their pace to suit little Danny's short legs.

Some time in June Edah learned through her neighbors that a wealthy farmer was building a large house about a mile beyond them towards the south.

She had noticed materials being hauled and workmen driving by morning and evening.

She had also observed a tall, well-built athletic fellow who often walked one way or other, sometimes both—usually with bared head, cap under his arm and hands in his pockets, his dark crimson four-in-hand gaily fluttering in the breeze or one end soberly depending in true orthodox style from his collar, while the other rested carelessly on one shoulder—whistling as he went and gazing about over the fields or on the far-distant landscape.

Robert's home was not on the main traveled road, so he often went into the Johnson's yard—indeed he was quite as much at home there as in their own—and climbed up on the side gate to get a better view of the passing vehicles.

Edah had not fully recovered from her terrible fright in Biloxi, so Robert was not allowed very far out of her sight; but she knew both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson understood and respected her feelings in the matter—besides they had come to have a great deal of personal interest in the lovable boy and were very watchful of him when on their side of the yard.

One lovely warm evening as he was perched on his favorite outlook, the tall young man stopped and talked to him. He evidently knew what to say to a small boy, for that individual, after watching him till the hill hid him from view, climbed down and hastened to tell his mother all about it, winding up with, "What's his name, mothey?"

Edah had seen him also, as he came down the other

road—from her position on the steps of her little front porch where she was sitting with Mildred on her lap.

She could not help thinking of her favorite “Adam Bede,” when she noted the stranger’s dark, tumbled hair, “so like trampled grass.”

Without really thinking what she was saying, in answer to Robert’s question she absently replied “Adam.”

A faint pink crept into her cheeks when she realized what she had done—but she thought better to let it stand than make any explanations—“besides,” she smiled softly to herself, “*perhaps his name is Adam!*”

“Now, Robert, dear, come put your cheek up close, *close* to mothey’s—love her tight around the neck—now go see what Danny is doing and bring him into the house with you, for supper will soon be ready. Remember to be very gentle with him, he’s such a little fellow.”

Before leaving on his errand he stooped and kissed baby Mildred’s little cheek.

Edah had noted a rapid development in Robert since the advent of the two little ones. He was tremendously interested in both at first and became very fond of baby Mildred, but Danny in a way interfered—came in for a share of the attention which he considered belonged exclusively to himself.

His mother saw and understood the situation and was glad things were just as they were for his sake.

She carefully went about trying to give him a responsible feeling toward the small boy;—cultivated the protective instinct which was naturally strong within him. It had made him seem much older in this short while, but she knew it was not a bad thing and would work out for his good.

Her daily prayer to God was, “Help me to direct, but let me not stand in the way of his development along the line of his own nature.”

CHAPTER XII.

JULY had started in warm and sultry and seemed gradually to increase in temperature as the month advanced. Everything was dry ;—plants and the growing grain, as well as the parched ground, cried out for rain.

Edah had looked out in the early morning at her geraniums—even at that hour they looked dusty and dejected. She had meant to water them, but Mildred had been so fretful and difficult to put to sleep the night before, she had forgotten all about the flowers.

The children had not slept well so of course her rest was broken.

She glanced at the heavens hoping to see some signs of rain—but the sky was like burnished brass.

After giving the thirsty plants a drink she made haste to get done what work was necessary while the children still slept, and before the fierce heat of yesterday was again upon them.

After breakfast Mrs. Johnson came in ; Mildred was having her morning bath and crying lustily at the top of her might. Danny was contributing his share to the vocal harmonies and Robert was trying to be heard.

“Did you hear the free opera?” said Edah, as her visitor came near enough for her to be heard. “It’s so warm, I feel a little like joining the chorus myself,” and she fastened the last button of the baby’s thin wrapper—an old one of Robert’s—and handed her to Mrs. Johnson.

“If you’ll hold her a few minutes while I get her

bottle ready, I think we will have it a little more quiet for a while."

Edah's prognostications were correct;—Mildred's outlook on life was more tranquil and serene after getting her morning meal.

Mrs. Johnson helped Edah get things in "ship-shape" for the day. She had a way of "happening in" when things seemed thickest—when Edah was at her wit's end, scarcely knowing which way to turn first.

A few minutes of her valuable assistance at the psychological moment would help clear the atmosphere for the whole day.

She said when leaving, "me and my old man are going to spend the day with Hilda," referring to their nearest married daughter, "and I tank it be late before we come home. Here is the back-door key."

"All right; I imagine you will find it pleasanter coming home in the cool of the evening if it keeps up like this," pushing the damp hair back from her forehead. "Hope you'll have a pleasant day. I'll feed the chickens and look after things. Do you think Mr. Johnson would quarrel with me if I should milk his cow?"

"No, he say leave both cow till he get home."

"I feel ashamed to let him milk Beauty for me so often;—it is surely kind of him, though.

"I wish you would have a look at my bread before you go," leading the way into the kitchen—"something is wrong with it."

She opened the door of her gasoline oven remarking, "it looks as if something had stepped on it,—whatever do you suppose is the matter? it was not a bit light when I put it in to bake but I thought it would pop up like yours always does when it got hot."

"I tank it ban too cold," at the same time casting about in her mind for some other reason more in ac-

cord with the state of the weather. Presently her eye lighted upon a covered cup on the kitchen shelf partly hidden by the salt jar; she glanced at its contents and held it before Edah's astonished eyes.

"I see!—I forgot to put in the yeast!" and her spontaneous, gurgling laughter rang out. "I remember now, Mildred cried and I threw the cover over the crock and went to her then forgot to come back."

A half hour later Edah saw the pair drive off, and she felt a little lonely—she could not tell why.

A hot day and three fussy children with broken rest added, will sometimes put one into an abnormal state.

She took the two older children into the yard under a large maple tree, while Mildred slept, and kept them amused in its grateful shade till they, too, showed signs of drowsiness.

When the last one, Robert, was disposed of she made preparations to improve the golden opportunity by taking a nap herself.

As she went to fasten the front-door screen she saw a wagon standing opposite her neighbor's gate and two men supporting a third, just entering the yard.

She stepped out and told them there was no one at home, adding, "can I do anything?"

As she spoke she understood that one of the workmen had been overcome by the excessive heat—and a second glance told her that scarlet, swollen-looking face belonged to no other than "Adam," whose hair looked more than ever like "trampled grass."

She led the way into her own home and made ready the roomy, comfortable, spring-box lounge and hastened to fill a towel with cracked ice for the throbbing head.

"Hadn't we better call the doctor?" asked one of the men of Edah.

"He looks some better already, and it may not be necessary—but do as you think best," in a low tone.

The sick man opened his eyes—"never mind the doctor—I'll soon be all right."

Fresh relays of cracked ice were kept up all afternoon by one of the men—the other having returned to work.

Edah helped when necessary, but the dinner was to be made ready—and the children kept out in the back yard so as not to disturb the sick man.

As the afternoon wore away big black clouds began to pile up in the west, giving promise that at last the panting community was to have relief.

Edah ran into her neighbor's and saw that all was made ready for the impending storm which broke in tremendous earnest about six o'clock. Great gusts of wind blew the stifling heat to parts unknown, and the drenching rain which followed came to cheer and to bless.

Edah stood in her door looking out over the meadows and grain fields rejoicing in the down-pour, with Robert and Danny clinging to her skirts.

She drank in the welcome sight with almost as much avidity as did the parched earth and dusty plants, the rain, at the same time mildly wondering how the cows were to be milked, for she feared her neighbors would not be able to return home.

It was as she thought. The storm continued till it was too late for them to drive the long distance home that night, but the cows were milked in the dry barn by Jack Moore, the sick man's companion, who would have been delighted to milk a whole dairy herd, for the smiling "thank you" he received when his services were offered and at their close.

Because of "Adam," Danny did not get his nightly bath—for very often it was accomplished amid loud wailings—but all were taken to the tenantless, neighboring house for the night, while their own little home was given over to the strangers.

Before Edah slept,—through the open windows came sounds as of some great animal floundering in the water, and she understood her tenants were improving the opportunity presented by the inviting bathroom.

It was just the kind of night calculated to make one sleep and forget there had ever been sultry, scorching, intolerable weather; and baby Mildred made up for lost time and the restlessness of the past few days.

The sick man awakened early, without any pain, after a night's refreshing sleep.

He wandered about the house, looking almost with awe and reverence at the belongings of this unusual woman—stopping in front of Edah's soul pictures, reading them each in turn, beginning with the small topmost one—

"Let my memory perish, only that humanity may be free."

The frames of the two immediately below touched ends beneath the center of the one above.

"Iron-clad rules for self and boundless charity for others."

"What is fair for one is fair for all."

He turned away with hands in pockets and head bowed and softly walked back and forth across the room, his usually calm and staid feelings running mad riot.

Stopping at the open door he stood looking out over Edah's beloved view till the tumult within had partially subsided then turned and resumed his inspection.

The large center one about which the others were clustered was entitled "A tribute" and he wondered about it as he began reading.

"A long time ago in the far-away past, there was builded a magnificent cathedral.

"Its walls were made of such enduring material

that though the storms of the ages beat against it and the centuries settled down upon it, still it remained ineffaced—stately and majestic as in the beginning.

“Not far from this ancient structure there once dwelt a great painter, whose whole life was spent in perfecting his one masterpiece, which in dying he bequeathed to his friends.

“This wonderful picture had some peculiar characteristics or properties. For instance, in the dusk and through the darker hours of night a soft glow overspread its surface, bringing out every detail as in the bright light of day.

“It also possessed the strange and wonderful power of bringing peace to all beholders.

“To preserve this priceless gift to all generations the loving friends, with reverent, careful hands, carried their new possession to the neighboring cathedral and hung it high out of harm’s way in the perpetual twilight of the shadowy roof to charm and comfort the many pilgrims who sought relief from the griefs and sorrows of their earthly wanderings.

“Year after year the suffering, down-trodden and oppressed crowded through the great portal and adown the long aisle gazing with longing, expectant eyes on the picture that never failed.

“The great stone steps were worn thin with the weary feet of pilgrims that surged and thronged as the years went by.

“But at last there came a change;—the dispersing multitude glanced askance at one another under veiled eyes—wondering did others find the peace that was denied them?

“One among the vast throng, noting the disastrous change, determined to find out the cause.

“Alone he scaled the lofty height and with tender loving hands wiped off the accumulated dust and cobwebs of the ages and hung the restored picture

'on line' near the great open door, in splendid light and full view of all who entered.

"*But passing strange!*

"With unfailing regularity the pilgrims, whose numbers were augmented with the years, passed through the great doors and adown the long aisle—*seeing not the restored picture*—but with eyes fixed on the place where it once hung they paused with bowed heads and genuflections, and passed on to make way for others, missing the aim and object of their journey and returning as they had come, weary, discouraged and unhappy to continue their toilsome journey through life."

The reader was perplexed as to the meaning till he noticed on the shelf below the "Life of Tolstoy" and two volumes of his Essays and Letters; then he understood the "tribute" was paid to that great and good man.

On one side of the large central piece he read—

"If there's no sun, I still can have the moon,
If there's no moon, the stars my needs suffice
And if they fail, I have my evening lamp
Or lampless there's my trusty tallow dip
And if the dip goes out—my couch remains
Where I may sleep and dream there's light again."

Underneath, a small frame enclosed the words which had saved Robert's unborn life.

"We can suffer—may even die—but we *must do right!*"

Something new and strange was pulsing through his being;—he seemed lifted up and carried away out and beyond himself.

The high exalted sentiments got into his soul—and a feeling of stricture caught at his throat and something suspiciously like tears stood for a moment in his expressive gray eyes.

He turned and looked at the remaining two or three on the other side—

“ I expect to pass through this life but once ; if there is any good thing I can do or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now ; let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Below were the words—

“ Every day is a fresh beginning.”

“ Listen—”

At that juncture he was interrupted by Jack Moore who had just come in from milking.

“ I say, Phil, old boy, did you ever in your life ! I never saw a place like it ;—it’s different and yet it isn’t ! she’s a ‘ hummer ’ and no mistake ! ”

In cold, cutting tones, “ I’d advise you to tone down your remarks somewhat unless you want the lady herself to hear.”

“ No harm intended : ” rather meekly—“ how do you feel ? ”

“ Oh,” good-naturedly, “ I’m all right ; but I’m going to knock off to-day—and to-morrow being Sunday I think the two days’ rest will fix me up good as new.

“ That was a close call to a real prostration if not a nasty fall ” and he turned to meet Edah, who entered at that moment with her small brigade.

“ Good-morning,” smiling, “ I’m glad to see you are feeling better.”

“ Mrs. Brown, this is my friend, Philip Dempster,” said Jack Moore.

As the two bowed again and before the erstwhile patient could speak Robert said, looking up in his face, “ mothey said your name was Adam.”

Unlucky Edah let her self-conscious eyes fall on the infant in her arms, but laughed as she said by way of explanation, “ you reminded me of a friend by that

name,"—mentally resolving at whatsoever time and trouble, to explain any misunderstanding Robert might have in the future.

The young man was even more embarrassed and looked down at Robert—"Philip, is my name, but you may call me Adam if it is easier."

As might be supposed, Edah was known by hearsay and reputation throughout the village and countryside—especially since taking Dan's two children. The deed spoke for itself and Dan was never tired of singing her praises. So she was not a stranger to these two men, in a way; but there was a certain aloofness, which was a part of her nature, that kept people at a distance, only those to whom she held out the "golden scepter" of her acquiescence.

Edah deposited the small infant in her go-cart and turned toward the kitchen.

"Mrs. Brown"—Philip was trying to find suitable words of gratitude—"I cannot express to you how much I appreciate your kindness and—and—attention. If you will state what you think an—an adequate remuneration, I'll be more than pleased," he stammered, his hand in his pocket.

Jack Moore mentally whistled and said to himself, "he's struck hard!" knowing him to be a quiet, self-contained fellow who cared very much more for his socialistic propaganda than for women.

"Never mind about it," said Edah, "it was very little—besides it is a part of my business in life to be helpful when I can; I have come to think that service to our fellow-travelers is our only way of being able to show our gratitude to our Maker. I like to think of my little home as a life-saving station and I, the keeper, in the employ of the Government on High," looking through the open door to the clean, dark green of the fields shining in the morning sun. "But"—noticing their intended leave-taking—"I'm not going

to let you leave until after breakfast—that would be sorry hospitality,” and she hastened its preparation.

She borrowed some coffee from Mrs. Johnson’s pantry, as it was a commodity not used by herself or Robert and all sat down to a pleasant meal together, which to Edah was truly delightful. She had not before realized how much she needed congenial companionship. “Jack Moore was a kind, good-natured sort of fellow, but there were depths to ‘Adam’ she felt sure;—he looked like a man who thought.”

After breakfast her two guests departed leaving her alone to her daily tasks, and to memories of a pair of gray eyes heavily fringed with long black lashes, the pupils of which had a way of growing large quite unexpectedly—making them look more like gray-rimmed black ones instead.

She had forgotten to ask them to call again and was sorry. Her life was lonely in a way—“it would be so nice to have friends to whom she could talk, who could enter in, sympathize and understand and somehow she felt ‘Adam’ could.”

The romantic side of her nature was left unprotected as well as the intellectual unsatisfied. Her husband could have shielded her in the one case, and may have helped in the other—at least an arrangement could have been made on a less dangerous basis.

So the confusion and wrong reach out in an ever-widening circle where either are unfaithful to the marriage tie.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the days that followed, Philip Dempster became a frequent visitor to the little home. It would be difficult to tell who found the most pleasure in those visits, Edah, Robert, or the young man himself.

Robert was given a new set of tools and taught to use them by Phillip who also made a work-room for him in one corner of the wood and coal house. Mrs. Johnson looked on in quiet approval, although apparently seeing nothing.

Not a great while after their acquaintance began—he came one warm evening and found the lady of the house sitting on her little porch, looking so cool and fresh in her simple, white, dutch-necked and elbow-sleeved dress.

She arose with an extended hand of welcome—"I'm glad you've come," she said simply but with evident sincerity.

"It is so delightfully cool here it doesn't seem possible the temperature has been out of bounds in this vicinity,"—Phillip said as he seated himself by her side.

"Well," laughing, "it has, and what is more the children's tempers arose with the mercury. Each individual child seemed multiplied by two—four—I don't really know how many!"

With a humorous look in his gray-black eyes, "I'll wager you put in a call for Brown the Spanker!"

Edah laughed heartily—"he's a factotum of whom I'd not heard;—but it looked for a time as if *Mrs. Brown* might have to serve in that capacity.

"I had to hold my hands tight on several occasions—but it finally worked out without anything so direful happening."

He looked at the usually busy hands now folded quietly in her lap with an expression in his eyes often to be found there when she was not observing, and wished he might be appointed proxy the next time those hands had to be held: but he only said with an amused smile—

"Well, as you did not send for the public regulator, will you kindly tell me how you handled the situation?"

"I simply went off and left it, which was easy enough, wasn't it?" looking demurely into his face.

"I asked the sainted Lena to look after the boys, and while Mildred was sleeping I slipped over to the cemetery. I was no sooner seated than its blessed influence stole over me.

"I do feel so very sorry for my poor, overworked sisters, wherever they may be, who have no comforting graveyard with wondrous sights all around and no good neighbor like mine to come to the rescue for half an hour.

"Truly I have much to be thankful for!

"When I returned I was calm and serene myself and so was everyone else. You see the little separation gave each a chance to recover tone. It is a method of procedure I often resort to and it works wonders in many ways.

"The majestic calmness and quiet of that retreat, besides tranquilizing my spirit for the time, has come to be so restful that I contemplate the long, dreamless sleep with feelings of anticipation, almost.

"Not with a morbid longing," noting his peculiar expression of disapproval, "but with a readiness to answer the summons whensoever it comes."

He hastened to turn the conversation into channels less gruesome and disquieting.

There were plenty of women who would have enjoyed any attentions from Philip Dempster: but as his friends all knew he had carefully and deliberately shunned them.

He had his ideal of womankind, but the women he had met heretofore had fallen so far below as to be quite uninteresting to him. The whole force of his nature found an outlet in his propaganda work.

To his mind socialism was the panacea for all the wrongs of the world, for which he felt so much sympathy. He was quite sure there would be no down-trodden and oppressed when his beloved socialistic ideas were once put into practice.

This woman's subtle attraction for himself he had fought against in the beginning—arguing it out pro and con when he should have been sleeping—but finally acknowledged himself a fool not to seize a prize if he could, especially as the more he knew Edah the more he became aware that in her he realized his feminine ideal.

So he determined to woo and win this noble woman if he could; while he early realized the mainspring of her actions was conscientious convictions of right and duty—which he called religion—his beloved socialism would not be antagonistic, he felt sure, once she understood, besides—he had to acknowledge to himself that he was clearly, plainly, hopelessly in love.

“Did you bring the book as you promised?” after a silence between them where each one had been watching the fire-flies and listening to the voices of the night.

“It is so pleasant outside, we can begin it another time,” he suggested—almost urged.

“It is lovely but my mending basket looks so formidable I shall hate to touch it if I leave it much longer, besides,” adding gaily, “this is Saturday night and I do not mend on Sunday you know!”

He seated himself by the lamp and drew the first volume of the life of Karl Marx from his pocket while she attacked the mound on top of her work-basket.

As he became absorbed in his theme, from time to time, the long, supple fingers of his left hand unconsciously buried themselves in the fine, soft, thick, dark hair on the top of his head.

Edah was amused at the absorbed reader and did not wonder that his hair often wore the appearance of "trampled grass."

The evening sped away altogether too quickly and nine-thirty—Edah's time limit, was already overpassed before either realized it.

"Do you like it?" he asked as he closed the book and returned it to his pocket while with his two hands essayed to make a semblance of a part in the tumbled hair.

"Never mind," she laughed, "it's hopeless!"

The remark confused the young man somewhat, but he finally concluded to join in her laughter.

It was the last time he allowed his mind to take the unusual attitude of dwelling upon his personal appearance, even in her presence. Scrupulously clean he always was and had a distinctive manner of dress even though very plain.

Sobering, Edah answered his question; "I enjoy your reading immensely and think this man a wonder or wizard—but whether I shall ever fully understand what he is trying to set forth I can't say."

"But you will, I am sure, and think it wonderful as I do."

"Come to-morrow and have dinner with us and if the morning is fine we will take the walk we have been promising Robert before dinner, instead of after;—for it is my customary practice to prepare that meal on Saturday—giving myself one long holi-

day. Perhaps we can read a little,—but with the children all wide awake that is very problematical,” smiling and shaking her head.

With an acceptance and lingering hand-shake, he was gone.

She locked the door and blew out the light—hoping the darkness would hide even from herself her blushing face.

“She must not allow him to hold her hand like that again. No, it was not right—she must be circumspect—for, was she not married?”

The thought sent a cold chill to her heart. Clasp- ing her head in her two hands she stood motionless a moment—then throwing off the unpleasant mood she returned to thoughts of the delightful evening.

She went into the kitchen, lighted a candle and fixed the baby’s food for the night, then went to bed—but it was long before she could sleep. She listened to the regular breathing of the dear, healthy children and felt again the thrill of that leave-taking hand-clasp,—but no more specter-like memories from out the past intruded upon her happiness.

The next day was not propitious for walking outside; the morning was rainy and the rest of the day lowering, but they found enjoyment and pleasure indoors.

After the dinner was over and Robert had helped “do up” the work he came and stood by his mother’s side and seemed disinclined to amuse himself or Danny. He did not coax and tease as many children would have done but it was evident he wanted something he did not like to ask for.

Philip guessed:

“Come on, Robert, let us go see how things look in the work-shop this rainy day;— We may be able to do some planning for next week.”

The boy flashed up at him a glad look,—his childish

features fairly radiant, and the two moved off in the direction of the wood-house chatting gaily as they went.

Danny resented being left behind and was not slow in letting the fact be known.

“Never do you mind,” taking him by the hand and seating herself on the floor beside the scattered play-things—“you and mothey are going to make a g-r-e-a-t b-i-g house!”

Later when Edah passed through the kitchen on an errand with Mildred on her arm she saw her bare-foot boy and Philip Dempster—the latter with trousers turned up at the bottom—making their way through Beauty’s pasture, heading for the silver stream running through the hollow.

Edah smiled; she knew how happy Robert was and a kindred feeling spread throughout her being.

It was not till all was quiet in the evening that the Karl Marxian readings were resumed.

Edah sat near the door leading into the bed-room—listening for sounds from Mildred who had not gone off to sleep with her usual readiness.

As the reader progressed further into the life history she was much impressed with the magnitude of the work done by that indefatigable man—and when he closed the book and replaced it in his pocket, she remarked, “How tremendously busy he was! I suppose though, his very ability in that line was one of the marks of his genius.”

“Judging from what I’ve seen to-day, according to your definition you must belong to that distinguished category;” looking as if he could say more.

Edah was quick to detect “symptoms” and always speedily veered away from the dangerous topic—although the necessity for these changes was becoming

more frequent—so many things seemed to give occasion;—but she only said——

“Yes, mothers have abundant opportunity of being infinitely busy. Do you know, I was reading the other day of a new and wonderful method of education for the young, the principle of which is ‘discipline through liberty!’ Does not that sound good? It must certainly revolutionize existing conditions being so diametrically different!”

He smiled at her enthusiasm—“Nothing could be better!” adding thoughtfully, “I have been thinking how you must dislike the very thought of subjecting the free, independent spirit of Robert to the process of the ‘mill’ as at present conducted by our public schools.”

“When I allow myself to consider the matter of his education two or three years hence, it positively makes me gloomy. The method in use with us at present consists in four or five school sessions daily!”

“Really! When do you find the time, may I ask? I am more than ever convinced the term ‘genius’ fits.”

She shook her head—“Well, it is like this;—whenever my boy wants to know anything—if he is playing outside and his blessed little mind has become curious, active, or in a reaching-out mood—we have a session at once!

“Bread may rise and fall,” she added gaily, “nay, more, kingdoms and empires may do the same—but when Robert—and later these others—wants to learn, there is a lesson immediately!” and her low peals of merry laughter were too contagious to be resisted.

Becoming thoughtful—“however the school period never lasts beyond ten minutes,—often not so long—but during that time he has to concentrate;—I find it is very good for me as well.”

“The business of being a mother requires a tre-

mendous scope of training and preparation I should judge—according to your idea of being a mother,” he remarked gravely, looking fixedly at her.

“Yes”—too full of her subject to be alive to the dangers attending its discussion—“it seems to me to be the most important business in life—yet one that in reality is entered into with the least preparation!—and then we are surprised at the wrong way things are going in the world!”

Her face reflected the intensity of her feelings on the subject and she remained in silent thought her eyes fixed upon the floor.

Presently rousing herself she again referred to the article which had so interested her and she went on to tell in detail what she had gleaned.

“My desire for my children has been to make them industrious,—clean within and without—wholesome, truthful and above all unselfish;—if I only knew how to teach this method it would be such a help.”

Without waiting for her companion to speak she continued, “Do you know the teachers, under the training of this wonderful woman founder, are forbidden to smother the individual personality of a child *under penalty of death*,—almost!”

“Please excuse the exaggeration”—archly—“to be really truthful it is not quite so bad as that, but”—and she trailed off into thought, murmuring softly, “it is so wonderful—wonderful!”

She had almost forgotten the presence of her companion and they sat silent some moments.

Presently she went on, “it looks as if the poor, dear, helpless little ones are at last to be allowed ‘to come into their own’ after the lapse of so many centuries. It has been a long time in coming.” Thoughtfully—“you know the Bible says, ‘the first shall be last.’”

With his elbow on the table and his head resting in

his hand he looked at her—"it never said a truer thing;—but—do you really believe everything you find in the Bible?"

She smiled back at him—"Let me answer by asking—do you?"

"I'm very sure *I do not*—precious little—it is much too contradictory. Early in the volume we are told God gave the command to men, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and then proceeded to order them to slay the Amalekites, horse, foot and dragoons.

"As for hell and damnation!"—with rather startling brusqueness—adding disgustedly, "some people's idea of God is my idea of a monster!"

Edah could not help a tiny little smile—but instantly sobering—"surely there must be a day of reckoning—a time of evening things up—of righting the wrongs which are not requited here below!" with an inflection of bitterness in her tones he had never heard before.

He gave her a look of searching scrutiny then hastened to say, "well, doubtless there will be, as you suggest, some sort of process of 'evening up;'—perhaps it might consist in transforming at death all the husbands into wives and the wives into husbands!"

His remark occasioned much merriment but deep down in his heart Philip Dempster was thirsting for a man's blood—the man who had wronged this peerless woman whom he loved!

After a silence of several minutes, he said, "Really I think I must be distantly connected with the aborigines of the land, for the God of the Indian—of Nature—the Great Spirit is good enough for me."

As he paused she made answer, "I used to believe every word of scripture—or at least I thought I did—but now I have come to a point where I have let go of everything till some future day of enlightenment, ex-

cept this—which embraces my creed, doctrine and my all-consuming ambition!”

Her eyes grew deep and dark with feeling and a look of reverential awe stole over her features, as she said softly.—

“I believe with my whole being what the apostle John says of the Christ—“He was the *Word made flesh*’ and it is for us to be obedient to His wonderful teaching: for ‘Never man spake like this man.’ How—why—when—or where—to my mind are irrelevant questions. One fact alone stands clearly out—the necessity for unquestioning, prompt obedience to His known commands.”

The earnestness and intensity of her look and manner added weight to the words she uttered.

’Twas the most powerful sermon he ever remembered to have heard and made the most lasting impression. He could not escape the conviction that there must be a great deal in a religion that could be the mainspring of such a life and spirit as hers, and silence reigned in the cheerful sitting-room for some time.

When she spoke again it was along the line of what they had, earlier been reading, and of his theories of life which were so vital to him. While she could not always quite agree with his deductions she never argued against them: only once she had said—“But won’t the same old majority rule, and the same weak minority be oppressed?”

She was almost sorry she had spoken for he looked a little disappointed for a moment, she thought, before answering her objection,—conclusively to his mind at least, if not to hers—“and it might be he was right and she wrong” she reasoned to herself—at any rate there was never any more of any thing that looked like a difference of opinion regarding his precious views of life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE new house was nearing completion and Edah was distressed in many ways. First and foremost Philip was going back to the neighboring city from whence he came, and the days and evenings bereft of his delightful companionship were almost unthinkable.

Then there was the other horn to the dilemma—"Could she manage matters so that Philip would not say the things she wanted to hear, yet must not let him say?" For it was becoming daily more difficult to keep from getting into dangerous waters.

It was late in September and Philip was leaving in a few days.

He had been to dinner with them and the day being so fine, they went for a farewell walk.

Mrs. Johnson had begged to keep the children but Edah knew it would be such a disappointment to Robert,—besides she felt safer somehow with them along.

It was one of those perfect autumn days that seems more like the beginning of a new season than the end of the one just passing—when all nature was resting and holding its breath so as not to hasten the change and force the issue with the approaching season.

Edah thought nothing could be more perfect—"the day—the hour—the place!"

When they started Philip had wanted to push Mildred's little go-cart.

With a grateful look and a, "No, I thank you," she

added, "but if you will you may assist Danny whose short legs make locomotion painfully slow at times."

So with a wave of the hand to the Johnsons on their front porch they started up the hill.

Robert—beaming with happiness, for he was tremendously fond of Philip—ran on ahead; stopped, turned back and walked demurely by the young man's side holding his hand and talking like a magpie for a while,—then bounded off again—too full of spirits to keep time to Danny's slow steps.

The quiet of the Indian Summer day held enthralled their little community as well as themselves and the whole country-side.

Looking northward, the small village of Blackburn, about a mile and a half distant, was nearly hidden under its umbrageous trees and clung to its hills like moss on great stones.

They wandered slowly up to the summit, where they had often gone before, too engrossed with the beauty of it all for much conversation, only such as was shared by the children.

At the entrance to the cemetery they paused—holden with the marvelous view which unfolded itself in every direction.

On the south was an orchard laden with the red fruit of autumn, like huge bouquets of American Beauty roses.

Farther on to the east lay the valley of the river, smiling in the rich fulfillment of its harvest.

The late afternoon sun sent a warm glow over the whole landscape, performing the miracle of alchemy.

As they entered the quiet abode of the dead, Edah thought for the hundredth time, "what place more fitting?" it was the point in that whole country round about, nearest the sky.

Rich fields covered with golden crops rolled away from it in every direction to the valleys—and beyond

the valleys were other hills covered with the blue Indian Summer mist;—like a fugue where the theme is taken up first by one voice and then another, in one key and then another and all woven into one another and were held together by a wonderful accompaniment of amber light and ultra-marine blue haze.

Sinuuous lines of trees followed the river, the creeks and the valleys—now every shade of topaz, emerald and garnet. The leaves had not yet begun to fall, so were in the fullness of their glory.

As the long shadows began to stretch themselves eastward, they realized the wondrous picture would soon be gone—never to be just the same again.

She was quite unconscious that Philip had wheeled the go-cart with the sleeping baby, accompanied by the other two—to the end of the road at the cemetery gate—where they awaited her coming.

She still stood engrossed with the scene—its tranquilizing spirit blending and harmonizing with the joy in her soul. She thought she “never would forget that day”—it would stand out as one nearest Heaven.” And she never did!

Many times in after life it came back—recalled by the haze, the scent of an autumn day—but the glory had all gone out, leaving only a sensation of soul-sickness and nostalgia as each vivid detail spread out before her memory.

But no premonitions marred her perfect happiness that glorious afternoon.

Those children of hers were seldom long out of her mind and presently she turned, wondering at the quiet. Smiling as she located the happy group, she came with long, swinging, graceful steps to move the small party homeward.

He refused their united invitation to stay and have supper with them—saying in a low tone for Edah’s ear alone that later she might expect him.

After all were put to bed, Edah threw a light wrap about her and seated herself on the porch to await his coming.

Even Danny's loud wailing at the ceremony of being clean, was not sufficient to bring her thoughts to earth again—although it sometimes had the effect of making her quite distressed and set her wondering if her method were faulty that he did not seem to get over the habit.

She had not long to wait—for soon out of the deep shadows of the moonless night she discerned the outlines of his figure as he turned the corner.

With bared head, cap under his arm and hands in his pockets he walked briskly up.

The sensations which coursed through her being at his approach, compelled her analyzing attention—for a fraction of a second only—for she put those disturbing thoughts aside “till a more convenient season,” while she cordially welcomed him as if they had not met for days, instead of two short hours.

She plunged into speech at once; she did not dare let Philip do the talking in that quiet, romantic hour, “In the dark,—in the dew,” and “only their two selves in all the whole wide world!”

Soon she suggested going in.

“Let us stay and watch the moon come up—it must be nearly if not quite full about now?”

Nothing would have been more in accord with Edah's feelings than to watch that witching miracle with Philip sitting by her side, enjoying its beauties with her—but she felt the danger of it and was firm in her desire to go inside.

“It is beginning to grow chilly these September evenings almost as soon as the sun goes down,” she said as she led the way indoors.

She turned up the light saying as she did so, “Let

me see if I can recall where we left off," making a feint of thinking hard.

He had seated himself among the pillows of the lounge with a forlorn hope that she would join him——

"I did not bring the book to-night; I thought it might be the last before I should be leaving and I had some things I wanted to talk with you about."

There was a sudden ominous vibratory tone in his voice.

Deep consternation seized her! "but she mustn't let him, indeed she must not!"

So she did the talking.

She talked of the children and their cunning little ways and sayings—of everyday happenings—of incidents from out her girlhood days—of anecdotes she had read—of grotesque things of which she had heard, and the people she had known—and her talk was interspersed with repeated peals of laughter. She became flushed and excited and her eyes shown with a brilliancy in keeping with her inward tumult.

Presently Mildred began to fuss and Edah went in to soothe her off to sleep, but she was in no condition to quiet anything and she made sorry work of it.

Finally in her efforts with the baby she had somewhat calmed herself and then had the satisfaction of seeing Mildred drop off, apparently, into a sound sleep.

When she emerged from the darkened bed-room, shading her eyes with her hand—Philip was standing with his hat in his hand ready to go.

"Is it so late as that?" glancing at the clock as she spoke—"she is usually not so hard to manage.

Don't you think you can run in again before leaving?"

She tried to speak carelessly, but was conscious of a more or less dismal failure in the effort.

He looked at her searchingly;—he had been trying to puzzle out the meaning of her unusual conduct all the evening. “I will most certainly if I can; but I hope with your permission to come down often on Saturday or Sunday—it is for you to say,” with a look in his eyes that conveyed volumes of meaning.

Edah felt their compelling influence and hesitated—“you know it would grieve me very much to lose the pleasure of your visits,” in a low tone and with an earnestness and truthfulness of manner which left no doubt in the mind of her listener.

He could scarcely restrain the impulse to catch her up in his arms and breathe in her ear his great and absorbing love then and there—have it out and know his fate—but because of that same deep love he respected her evident wishes and remained silent, but it took colossal effort on his part.

“So it was over!” and Edah sighed deeply as she locked the door—she did not know whether from relief or sorrow.

But that dangerous time was safely passed;—when next they met—two weeks later—it was with a joyous light-heartedness on Edah’s part and he responded in kind.

The week-end visits continued throughout the winter—the readings and discussions went on and their evident pleasure and delight in each other’s society was given free rein—unchecked—but the deeper waters were not stirred.

He accepted the place she assigned him and was apparently content.

Not long after Philip’s departure Edah received a letter from Mrs. Williams’ home town addressed in a strange hand bordered in black.

Her heart sank upon taking it from the mail-box

and she laid it on the table feeling almost unable to break the seal.

The weekly letter from her friend was several days overdue and she had planned to write again herself that very night. She had about made up her mind to tell this dear friend about Philip, whom heretofore she had only mentioned casually as she did the others who came in contact with her life.

"Now she could never, *never* confess her growing fondness for Philip and his unspoken love for her!"

She wanted so much to have her friend's advice—but something had held her back. Now she was face to face with it—"what was that something?"

Grief-stricken and terrified she dared not pursue that long forbidden line of thought so she hastily arose and took the fretful baby in her arms and walked back and forth soothing it—then seated herself by the table and opened the foreboding letter.

'Twas as she feared.

It was written by the youngest daughter and conveyed the sad news of her mother's death after a very short illness of pneumonia.

"She mentioned your name in her delirium many times,"—the letter said.

Baby Mildred dropped off to sleep and Edah sat weeping forlorn and sorrowful tears. Her desolate heart called out for Philip—for a sympathetic friend in her lonely grief.

This had been a hard day for her—besides being one of her busiest—things had gone wrong from the morning. Robert pounded his thumb instead of the tack he had intended—Danny climbed up on the porch railing and fell over narrowly escaping a broken collar bone—and the baby had been fussy—refusing to take her accustomed nap—and on top of all—this crushing news!

But some women must work even though they weep

and she arose and carried the sleeping child into the bed-room and laid it on its own little cot—fervently hoping it would take a good long nap—and went to finish the week's ironing.

When at last the unhappy day was ended and all was quiet within, she stole out on her little porch and stood with her back against one of the pillars gazing into the silent night—inexpressibly sad and heavy-hearted.

She gave herself up to her feelings of loneliness—realizing in the death of this loved friend, she had lost her one earthly support in matters of the soul.

Her mind went back to the hard, defiant, hopeless days before they two had met and the tears welled up and overflowed as with tender recollections she recalled how this good samaritan had poured oil upon her wounded heart and bade her live.

She had come to understand more of this woman's nature as her own developed along somewhat the same lines. She could see how this friend—like many another—had been caught in the "Tangled web of things as they are," and could not extricate herself.

"But now"—and she looked into the dark arching vault of Heaven studded with its myriad stars—"she has gone out into unrestricted freedom—perfect liberty!"

"Unfettered and untrammelled by Earth's laws, customs and senseless traditions, where she too, would join her when her own work was finished," and she bowed her head, "God grant that her mantle fall on me and make me worthy."

The cool frosty air made her feel better and something from out the great silence of the night whispered comfort and peace to her sorrowing heart.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE snowy Saturday evening in mid-winter Edah and Robert sat by their cheerful fire waiting for Philip: the former quite uneasy for a terrible blizzard was raging and she knew perfectly well he would walk out through it and she thought anxiously, "no one should be abroad in such a storm of biting wind and driving snow."

She preserved an outward semblance of calm, but many times she went into the kitchen-dining-room ostensibly to see after the fire in the hard-coal range—but in reality to take another look through the snowy window panes at the wild storm outside and strain her ear for the sound of the closing gate.

She had placed a burning candle in the East window of the outside kitchen to light his way through the yard.

Robert was allowed to sit up a little later than the others and the time had been extended as a special privilege on this particular evening.

He was beginning to get impatient and for about the tenth time asked his mother, "Don't you think it's most time for Philip?" when above the roar of the wind were heard unmistakable sounds of someone stamping the snow from his feet on Edah's back porch.

"There he is now!" rushing in haste to open the door for him, Edah following not far behind.

"Merry Christmas everybody—here's Santa Claus!"

said the young man in jolly tones—speaking to the boy but looking with glad eyes over his head into his mother's face which reflected a welcome that "was worth coming for in that wild night," the young man thought as he removed his outer coat and shook it free of snow on the windy porch.

Robert took him by the hand and the three entered the warm, bright, cosy room.

Edah sat with her work, a pleased spectator while Philip and Robert laughed and chatted and had a good time together.

Presently the clock struck. The boy looked pleadingly at his mother—"Mayn't I stay up a little longer, I'm not sleepy?"

She smiled—"I believe you. You may wait until it strikes for the half hour."

When that time had rolled altogether too quickly by Edah arose saying briskly, "Come, Robert:" that individual moved with reluctant feet in the direction of the bed-room.

Rising as he spoke Philip asked, "Would you like me to turn the bed back for you? I wonder if I know how?"

"Mothey always fixes it when she puts Danny to bed but"—delighted satisfaction radiating from the little face—"I would like to have you come too."

And Edah allowed Philip to usurp her place while she sat listening to their whispering tones as the preparations for bed went forward.

As he re-entered the room she said, "These cold nights the bath-room is not warm enough for them to have their bath after I open both doors for the heat to go through from the kitchen, so it has to be done earlier in the day. I think when Danny finds he escapes in the evening he has a hope that baths are over forever! but really," she added, "he does seem to be getting a little less difficult."

"The bed-room itself does not seem to be any too warm right now," said Philip as he lifted the top of the base-burner to see if it could hold any more coal and opened up the draft.

While he was busy with the two stoves she remarked, "Don't you think you would better go over and tell the Johnsons you will be pleased to accept one of their many invitations to spend the night?"

"I arranged that little preliminary as I came through their back yard,—I was sure they would be delighted!" naively.

"Of course they will be! you know she has an unbounded admiration for yourself!"

"Oh, has she?—they are nice people and good neighbors and I am glad for your sake they are so near."

"To say nothing of your own on occasions like the present," she laughingly retorted—adding seriously, "It is a cause of never-ending thankfulness on my part.

Now if you are through with your work and can take the time will you kindly be seated while I unfold a matter which has been perplexing me for some time."

After a little pause, "I have come to a point where I greatly need advice,—but—I almost know beforehand exactly what you'll say."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, *indeed!*" in a lively manner—"so I suppose it won't really help the decision after all!"

"Well, try me and see," said the young man.

Edah let her sewing fall into her lap while she gravely stated her trouble.

"Robert is so very fond of music—most children are, I fancy—and I am hesitating about the purchase of a graphophone. He could thus hear some of the world's finest music and while it would educate his

musical taste along high lines, would at the same time give him so much pleasure and enjoyment.

“But,”—she added ruefully,—“Is it necessary that he should *have* a musical education”—hastening to add as she saw his dissenting face—“I have the money, but you know I’m saving up for the nurse’s salary, of which I want to tell you later—and after that is accomplished I have visions of setting up another ‘Castle Industrie’ wherein some good woman, whom no man has discovered, may have the opportunity of living again in her dear orphan children.

“So you see it looks like the greatest folly for me even to think of the music, in light of these immense possibilities for good. Now what *do* you say?” with perplexity written in her every feature.

“I will send at once for material for the cabinet-table and Robert and I will have such fine times making it when I’m over!” her companion answered amusedly.

Edah laughing said, “Well!—I don’t believe I did know exactly what you would say! but it is so very, very kind of you to make such a generous offer.”

Seriously—“I understand your difficulty perfectly, knowing you as I do, but I really think it would be right for you to get the machine. Should the musical side of a child be ‘smothered’ as you say, any more than any other? besides *I* believe it will be of untold benefit to Robert;” and the young man was speaking one word for the boy and a strong half-dozen for the mother whom he knew was so passionately fond of music and yet it was almost shut out of her life as she was now living it.

“I argue that way sometimes myself. Then again I know perfectly well that perhaps I should do without many other things that I almost consider absolute necessities, to forward so great a cause. It is so hard to know *just exactly* what is right!” and Edah

sighed—she knew Philip could not quite understand her view-point.

“Well,” in a light tone, “let us get down to business. Have you any idea the kind of graphophone you want?”

“How you do take things for granted!” laughing.

Somehow at his words and manner, as if there were no other side to be considered the tremendous matter of right and wrong which had occasioned her so much conflict seemed quite insignificant now.

Blushing guiltily—“I have some catalogues which I sent for a few days ago!” adding in a half embarrassed, comical way—“I remind myself of the preacher whose small boy was asked by one of the parishioners if his father was going to accept the ‘call’ which had recently come his way;—you know his answer—‘father is still praying over it but the furniture is all packed!’” Which remark occasioned much merriment on the part of both, and Edah, light-hearted and gay, went into the matter of selection with all the eagerness of a child.

When it was finally disposed of to her entire satisfaction and the letter written ready to send she once more settled herself with her work.

“Now, I’m going to tell you of my great find! you know I’ve been writing around and doing considerable investigation relative to the nurse I had in mind to help with the constantly increasing demands of the sick poor. I’ve had to refuse several times lately when sent for on account of sickness among my own children—and it is quite impossible for me to leave at night you know—I cannot impose upon dear, good Lena Johnson beyond the day-time. Well, a very nice young woman came to see me day before yesterday and I liked her looks so much that we came to terms immediately.

“She belongs near Brander—Marie Reed by name—

and has had one year of training. At the end of that time she was called home on account of the serious illness of her mother which lasted so long and was so expensive that when she was well enough to leave, Marie concluded to begin on something remunerative at once and hearing of this came to me. She seemed very pleased with my offer and is a quiet, sympathetic, practical girl who has known all her life what it is to work.

"One of these days Dan is going to marry again—which is all right of course—and I shall have to give up Danny, the thought of which grieves me sore. Perhaps his place will be filled with a real young baby like Mildred was when she came to me—taking up more of my time—so it is good to have a helper or perhaps I should say, substitute, although there is often plenty of work for two."

She did not realize she was treading on thin ice till she glanced into his face as she ceased speaking—but simultaneously came a hoarse bark from the bedroom, sounding perilously like croup.

Edah did not tarry: the child had had it before and from the first signal was right into the rigors of the attack. She wrapped her about with a blanket and carried her to the fire and for two hours she and Philip were quite busy.

The latter moved out the small iron bed into the living-room and presently the breathing grew less labored and the child went back to sleep.

As Edah placed her in the bed he whispered, "My, wasn't that awful! does she often have attacks like that?"

"It was only spasmodic croup—but that is always alarming to me," answered Edah. "She is going to be all right now I think."

"Let me sit by her and keep up the fires while you get some sleep," he urged.

“Thank you ever so much, but it’s not necessary. I shall sleep with one eye open—I’m used to it; but if you will you may look after the fire in the other room before you go and then we’ll all get to sleep for it’s quite late.”

The next morning they awoke to a world transformed. Purity and whiteness spread in every direction. The two, tall, blue spruces on either side the gate were marvels of beauty—their branches draped and drooping in their snowy mantles. The wind had died down and a Sunday quiet reigned everywhere.

Philip shoveled away the paths in front and cleared the porches while Eric Johnson opened up avenues in the rear.

The men vied with each other in their efforts to help Edah: she declaring, “They would certainly spoil her—if indeed it’s not already an accomplished fact;” she added humorously.

Mildred was better but she could not be allowed on the floor where she loved to be, which made her fretful and hard to care for.

The others caught the infection, and Edah—even with Philip’s assistance found the day not only busy—but her resourcefulness was tested to its utmost.

As he left to catch his train in the late afternoon he said, holding her hand in his and gazing into her eyes in the most disconcerting way—“If there are golden crowns to be had as rewards, the mothers of young children are certainly the ones entitled to them.”

“As I have told you many times—there are compensations of which only mothers know,” with half-averted face—trying to retain an unconscious attitude under that burning glance—which she was far from feeling.

Since work on the cabinet had begun Philip had been in the habit of coming down on Saturday afternoon: and those hours with Philip in the work-shop were ones of unalloyed delight to Robert and he looked forward with childish eagerness for the day—making numerous inquiries from the time Philip left—“Mothey when will Saturday come?”

The boy's ardent attachment for his mother's friend was mingled with something of awe and reverence for Philip's ability and attainments with the utensils of work.

Late one Saturday afternoon the two came into the kitchen with oily, grimy hands in search of soap and warm water.

“Well, the stand has received its last polish and the other things are unpacked—all ready to set up; little Pal is in quite a state of excitement,” looking affectionately down on the boy who really seemed in imminent danger of bursting.

Edah who was kneading her bread at the table held up two doughy, floury hands as a companion-piece to his;—“I really began to think I should have to ‘sit up’ with my bread to-night—it shows every evidence of having taken a hard cold but”—merrily—“with good warm treatment perhaps such extreme measures will not be necessary.”

While Edah was busy with the supper preparations Philip carried in the really beautiful cabinet, and set up the graphophone, Robert assisting by bringing in and putting away in their compartments the few records and before they sat down to the supper table everything was in readiness for a trial.

“Come see, mothey!” Robert called out in great glee dancing about the room in the fulness of his joy.

The cabinet was by far the most ornamental piece of furniture in the room and they had placed it in the corner between the bed-room and dining-room doors—

and on its beautifully polished top rested the new musical instrument.

Edah was sufficiently enthusiastic in her sincere praises to suit even Robert's idea in the matter and it was a truly happy group that sat down to the supper table and later gathered expectantly about the instrument,—only Robert had been much too excited to eat.

When the first strains of music floated out through the room he came and stood by his mother's side—motionless, straight, unbending, his hands behind his back and fingers closing tightly over his doubled-up thumbs—thrilled to the bone.

His flushed face and lustrous eyes, from which shone wonderment, awe and something akin to rapture, told of the tumult within that childish being.

Edah was more affected by her boy's exaltation than by the beautiful harmonies to which her hungry ear had been so long a stranger: while Philip sat with a sort of devouring look in his eyes as they rested without fear of detection upon the woman he loved.

Danny, and even Baby Mildred were both permitted to remain up on this most unusual and notable occasion.

When the few records had each been played twice, Edah carried Mildred off to bed, following a little later the same procedure with Danny, while at Philip's insistence he and "Little Pal" cleared away the supper things and washed and put up the dishes.

"Mothey, may I play one all by myself before I go to bed?" Robert asked as the three gathered once more about the graphophone.

"Certainly you may," closing the doors as she spoke so as not to disturb Mildred.

The boy selected at random, and under Philip's supervision carefully adjusted one of the records—again sending the sweet strains of unwonted music through the house.

Returning the disc to its compartment he turned to his mother for his good-night kiss, still keyed up to an unusual pitch.

As he and Philip were leaving for the bed-room Edah's eyes telegraphed a message to the latter which that gentleman was not slow to understand.

She seated herself with her evening work and listened to the low-toned monologue with which Philip sought to quiet the lad's excitement and pave the way for sleep—and she smiled as she thought she distinguished verbatim sections of the beloved Karl Marx.

It produced the desired effect on the child but above that monotony the music of the evening was riotously echoing within Edah's own being making her restless and uneasy. Her scruples about its purchase returned at this inopportune time to harass and torment her.

She arose and went into the other room.

Philip hearing her fussing with the range, came to her assistance.

"Does it need coal?" lifting the bucket as he spoke.

"No—it's all right."

As they moved together into the living-room she said, "That was very cleverly done—I could not have done it half so well."

"Thank you. When I get crippled and unable to work at my trade I've serious thoughts of becoming a professional sleep-producer!"

They both laughed; "you will certainly fill a 'long-felt want'—become a welcome public benefactor. However it is very seldom I find myself in need of such services—my method seems to preclude the necessity. The children never get anything but the most wholesome things to eat,—that coupled with plenty of out-door exercise and lack of excitement works wonders.

I have sometimes asked myself whether or not I

should provide more entertainment, but have come to the conclusion a perfectly normal, healthy child has untold resources within himself if let alone.

I often tell Robert stories of the early explorers and Indian lore, and we are half-way through Robinson Crusoe with which he is fascinated. He takes them in as a sponge drinks up water and will often spend hours re-living the incidents in his own person with the yard for his world—himself in the chief character rôle.

I used occasionally in the Fall allow him to 'explore' the cornfield as far as the creek, although I was always scared stiff."

He laughed.

"You may laugh—but I can tell you it wasn't any laughing matter at the time!"

"I think you did right—boys should be allowed considerable latitude."

With mock dignity, "My method is the same with my girls—or will be when *she* gets older—as with my boys!" At which they both laughed.

"As for myself—while others consider the theater, opera, cards and dancing necessary to their happiness and well-being—I have hours of joy and transport without a single one of them."

As they were speaking she had picked up Mildred's unfinished rompers and stood by the table working the button-holes. Suddenly tossing them back on the basket with, "Doesn't it seem unusually warm to you in here?" she flung wide the front door and stood sniffing the frosty air.

"I hadn't noticed it," with a half inquiring smile."

She closed the door and re-seated herself beside her work-table—but not to work.

Philip saw she was laboring under some inward excitement and wondered—at the same time saying as

he walked toward her book-shelf, "what would you like to-night?"

"I don't believe I feel like hearing anything; and she hastily arose and began walking back and forth—fingers tightly interlaced.

Presently pausing she exclaimed, "Oh, I could be so happy if I were not so miserable!"

"A very lucid statement indeed! I think I can understand your feelings perfectly!" and the young man laughed.

There were other words that came rushing and tumbling over each other to gain utterance—but the iron-barred gate had to be closed against them.

"Yes, I think you understand in a way—it's the same old question of money: I am sure it is an unmitigated evil, but I've not yet been able logically to dispose of it."

"When in doubt—take orphans!" laughingly quoting Edah's own words on a former occasion.

She, too, laughed a little as she recognized what she was now inclined to call "one of her subterfuges."

"The truth of the matter is, I do not really think we are to wait for doubtful conditions to be disposed of by reasoning. The situation resolves itself into a matter of faith, I feel sure. As my dear friend once said 'if we could only be obedient—trusting—God would run to meet us so fast we couldn't see Him for dust!'" and their laughter mingled, but tears were shining in the eyes of both.

"Of course, Edah, I cannot enter into your feelings in this matter. Money is a very useful thing I think and simplifies the business intercourse of men and nations:—'tis with conditions I have my quarrel—equal opportunity for all would bring about a new day for mankind," and he was launched upon his favorite topic and Edah's scruples for the nonce, retired from sight—only to re-appear from time to time till the

end of her life, causing her much sorrow, humiliation and suffering.

Her faith never rose high enough to "forsake *all* and follow Him."

The next day—Sunday—Edah sat alone after Philip had gone and the children were asleep. They had spent such a happy day all together.

The sweet-toned graphophone had truly proven a source of pleasure—and Robert had already learned to wind it—place the records and shut it off; and her joy in his delight was not the least of Edah's happiness.

The music of the afternoon still rang softly in her ears as she sat by the red light which shone from her base-burner.

Although the almanac said it was Spring, Winter had a habit of stealing back after night-fall and grasping things harshly in his cold icy hands, unwilling to relinquish his arbitrary sway.

In spite of Edah's glad and tender memories of the day—with their musical accompaniment—lurking in the background of her thoughts she caught glimpses of a dark, fleeting shadow.

It was not altogether a stranger to her—she had seen its dim outlines before, but would not give it heed.

From week to week she had felt her grip on the situation growing less firm.

She knew Philip's strong, forceful personality would some day assert itself and then—!

Frightened at her thoughts she hastily rose and donning her long sweater, stole out into the moonlight.

She went down the steps—out between the two tall evergreen sentinels that kept guard at the gate and walked up and down the lane in front of her place.

The frost sparkled like millions of gems on the

long, dried grass beside the fences and the soft light silvered fields, meadows and hills converting them into fairy-land.

From out her inner consciousness she heard the words of the Psalmist, "I will look up to Heaven from whence cometh mine aid." Involuntarily she lifted her eyes and out of her foreboding heart cried, "Help, help, dear Lord!"

The cold air relieved the sickening sensation she had begun to feel indoors, and her love of the beautiful in Nature soothed her and sent her thoughts into other channels.

Once more tranquil and serene she re-entered the house and made things ready for the night.

Thus again was this specter laid low which threatened her peace of mind.

After that they sailed over untroubled waters for some time: but one Saturday evening when the summer was young a tempestuous sea almost swamped her small barque.

The squall was sharp, sudden and most disturbing.

She had been bathing the two children and getting them off to bed so did not see the going-down of the sun which that lovely June evening was accomplished amid so much of splendor; but as she passed out on the way to her little porch she caught the unusual glow and hastened on, reaching the outer door as Philip Dempster entered the gate.

"Oh-h-h-h!" under her breath—"do come look and then say you are glad you're living!" with a look of exultation glowing in her face.

"I *am* looking! and I *am* glad I'm living!" in a voice not his every-day own—never removing his gaze from her features while his eyes glowed with a sudden light.

Tremendously confused Edah stammered out some common-place remark while the lofty expression gave

way to one of consternation—apprehension—alarm.

She thought her last “tack” had been made.

He noted the change and it sealed his lips though he paled with the effort, and the light died out of his eyes.

When he could command his voice—“Where is Robert?”

With intense relief—“I think he is with Eric: he dearly loves to go around with him at milking and feeding time. I dare say he has forgotten it is Saturday. Usually he gets so restless and nervous over the wait and asks me every ten minutes during the afternoon if ‘it isn’t most train time.’”

“Well, I was about to propose we walk to the top of the hill where we can have a better view of this really most extraordinary sunset.”

Slowly they wandered up the road—absorbing the glories as they silently walked along.

The valley from horizon to horizon was bathed in a misty, rose-colored haze that had been transfused—blended with molten gold—Heaven’s Own mixing.

The very air was tremulous with the unwonted color and a stillness reigned as if Nature feared to break the wondrous charm.

Edah gazed in rapture at her beloved world which was yet not quite her world—but changed and glorified for a half-hour’s adoration.

She was so alive to the beauties of nature and sensitive to the Voice of Him Who spake through that medium that her recent panic was forgotten.

Calm and tranquil she faced homeward as the twilight shades gradually absorbed the radiance of that lingering sunset.

Later as they sat together in their accustomed fashion, she with her work and he with a book—now closed preparatory to his departure—she said, “Do you know I had rather an unusual call this afternoon.”

“ Yes? ”

“ A young ‘ theologian. ’ He came in company with the superintendent of one of the Sunday-schools here.

“ I used to have calls from representatives of the different churches seeking to have Robert enrolled as a pupil, but I fear they have about given me up as hopeless—at any rate I’ve not been interviewed for a long time.”

“ The foul fiends fly away with the sects!!! One half of Christendom worships a *church* and the other half worships a *book*—neither worship God. We are all traveling the same rocky road, down to the brink of the same river Styx, where the same ugly boat is waiting for all; To my notion denominational soup is mighty thin diet for the trip! ”

Edah smiled up at him;—his intensity of feeling along that line always amused her.

“ Well, there is no doubt their banners are getting rather moth-eaten. I myself, would love to see the golden streamers of the pennant bearing the inscription of the eleventh commandment fluttering to the breeze in every land and clime.

“ But to hark back to my young man caller;—he seemed like a very nice fellow and very much in earnest—not yet through with his theological studies. Just at present he is traveling in the interest of Sunday-school extension or some such thing.

“ He seemed to have been informed as to our efforts among the sick-poor and asked a great many questions all of which you may be sure I was glad to speak about;—he did not even ask if Robert went to Sunday-school! ” and she smiled.

She had risen as she was speaking and folding up her work placed it on top of a pile of neatly-mended things ready to be put away.

Together they stepped out into the soft night——

“ You’ll be here to dinner, of course? ”

"No—I'm sorry to say. There is a pow-wow on for to-morrow and I am obliged to return in the morning," as his hand closed over hers in parting.

"Well, I *am* disappointed—but, 'my loss is their gain.' I suppose you are down for a talk?"

He assented.

"Please remember—socialist picnic or no—you have an engagement for next Sunday. Here's hoping the 'well won't be five miles deep and the pump out of order all the way down!'" she laughed—withdrawing her hand.

After she had watched him till he had turned the corner she re-entered the still house;—all intervening thoughts seemed to pass out of her mind and again her panic returned.

She saw once more that sudden change in Philip Dempster's face and it smote her heart.

"I must no longer be guilty of this *crime!*"—the word stung her in a maddening way.

"I must not let it go on another day,—I must bid him go!" then she grew weak and faint.

A voice pleaded, "perhaps you may get word—hear in some miraculous way of *his* death,—then all will be clear for hope—happiness—and *Philip!*"

Still another prompting, "why disturb matters? He is happy and so are you! Gradually, in time, his love will change to friendship to be yours forever!"

But even that did not prove exactly comforting and conscience once more returned to the attack.

"What of her convictions of right? It was not fair to Philip—besides some other woman would be glad of an opportunity to comfort and make him happy if only she, Edah, did not block the way!"

With a groan she covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, I must—must!" she wailed.

"But how can I—however can I!"

CHAPTER XVI.

EDAH stood in the dusky shade of her little piazza a week later—impatiently waiting for Philip.

She had fought that battle with herself over and over again—thinking she had reached a decision—then having it all to go over once more. One moment she thought she had risen to heights sufficient to enable her to give him up—the next she decided his coming belonged to the fixed order of things—was a matter of course—a necessary part of her life;—living without him was simply unthinkable.

In unceasing rotation the conflict went on until something happened to turn her thoughts into another channel.

Her listening ears had heard the train go through the village some time since and she grew nervous—uneasy over the delay—fearing she knew not what.

A clump of near-by petunias shed their perfume on the summer air all unheeded by the usually responsive mistress; but to-night she was too heavy-hearted to notice.

She wanted Philip's comforting presence—and she wondered why he did not come.

The suspense grew too strong for quiet waiting and she walked towards the corner for a larger outlook.

They met mid-way.

"I'm *so* glad you're come!" putting out both hands in a cordial greeting—"I began to fear all sorts of things, you were so late."

The outstretched hands were clasped in his while he bent low over her upturned face.

"The train was off time; then when I did get in Jack buttonholed me for a confab—but something has gone wrong—what has happened?" with grave concern, leading her to the waiting steps.

"Danny's gone!" in a choking voice as she seated herself against the porch pillar.

"Did Dan come for him?"

"Yes; he and the new wife were here to-day and when they left they took him with them. The child loves his father dearly and was happy to go with him, but—even while I knew it was right I—I did not want to give him up!" and there was a little catch in her voice which she could not control.

The signs of not far-distant tears hastened him to say, "I hope Dan got a nice girl—his first wife was a fine woman from what I hear."

"I hope she'll love Danny as much as I do!" There was no help for it now, the tears would come.

Philip stood it as long as he could, "that is one of the things I lay up against a *kind and merciful* God!"—with all the irony of which his voice was capable—"making stepmothers possible! what good can possibly come of it!" he asked bitterly.

"Oh, you must not think such things, indeed you must not! It isn't God, it's the wrong in the world, and it is just as likely to strike the innocent as anyone. The blame and responsibility, I suppose in the final analysis must rest upon us—the people.

To get her thoughts into pleasanter channels—"Come let's go in—I want to have a glimpse of my Little Pal if I may," and he put his arm through hers and together they went softly in and stood by Robert's bed, he standing between her and Danny's empty cot.

Not much more than the sleeping boy's outline

could be discerned by the dim light of the shaded glow lamp as he lay with arms outstretched in the abandonment of his first deep sleep.

As they re-seated themselves Philip observed, "How that boy does grow!"

"Yes," she answered, "both physically and mentally. Do you know I tremble before the wonderful personality of that child—fearing I may warp his beautiful nature or do the wrong thing somehow."

Edah was launched on her favorite and all-absorbing topic and things went on cheerfully after that.

They were so engrossed in their talk and in each other that they did not note the gathering clouds till a gust of wind from the southwest, scattering a few rain drops, announced the coming storm.

They hurried within and went about lowering windows and closing doors in preparation for what promised to be quite a storm—now that it was brought home to their observation.

"I'm always fascinated by these wild exhibitions of nature"—as they stood together in the open door and watched the on-coming conflict—"This battle of the elements—even when I realize the destruction and havoc they often leave in their wake, but"—feeling his silence—"perhaps it impresses you differently. Let us come in, I have my usual Saturday evening mending to do and it is not so early as it was," archly.

As they left the door he said, "Anything storm-tossed—even Nature—impresses me as sad; I cannot quite account for it. As a child I remember a neighbor's barn being struck by lightning in a violent storm. But I should hope I had outlived an impression made so long ago."

"It lives in your subconscious self, I suppose," demurely mischievous.

"Perhaps," and he laughed.

She knew and *he knew that she knew* he had no time or inclination to think of other than the simple, plain, uncompromising past and present that was obvious to any sane thinking person.

There was one passage of scripture Edah teasingly accused him of living by—the one referring to “man’s not being wise above what is written”—but secretly she adored him for it.

So they conversed in the pleasant intimate way habitual to them, literally resting in each other’s love, while the thunder rolled more muffled and the lightning flashed less brightly and the rain died into a gentle patter making a delightful accompaniment to the hum of their low voices.

Presently even that ceased and he arose to go.

“Why don’t you stay with the Johnsons’—it may begin to pour again any minute,” she urged.

“According to the old saying, ‘I’m neither sugar nor salt’—neither am I afraid, in spite of my subconscious self,” he added humorously.

“Well, what’s the use of getting wet when you don’t have to?” in a half-vexed tone.

He sobered at once—“I promised Jack I’d be there sometime before midnight;—I should have gone long ago—you must be dead tired and sleepy after being up the greater part of last night.”

“How did you know I was?”

“I met the whole Mellen family—sick kid and all—on their way to the circus as I came along. I’ll wager anything Net gave that a baby a green apple to eat, so she could finish her yellow-back novel in peace!” and a most disgusted look came over his face.

“Yes,” she made answer, smiling at the green-apple theory—“the baby was quite sick from having eaten something which did not agree with it. But”—thoughtfully—“what is one to do? the poor help-

less little victims must not be allowed to suffer if it can be helped."

"So long as someone else will do it for her she'll never exert herself to care for it or anything else. I really wish you would not waste your strength and rob yourself of sleep to help such a woman. Fancy taking the poor, pale little thing to the circus!"—look and tone were almost fierce at the recollection.

Edah was in sympathy with him, but added lightly, "Well, let's hope it won't hurt it. You certainly would not condemn two, hard-working people for seeking a little harmless entertainment at a circus if their tastes happened to lie in that direction—and"—laughing—"they could not very well leave the baby behind!"

But her companion did not smile—" 'Hardworking' does not apply to Net. I'm no end sorry for Jim, but that novel-reading wife of his I've no use for. Why, do you know when Jim comes home in the evening from a long day's work, he finds the house practically as he left it in the morning;—beds not made—dishes unwashed and a wife and baby anything but attractive looking. He has to help put things in order besides getting the greater part of the evening meal, while she keeps up a constant complaint and fault-finding.

"I would have more sympathy for her if she were caught stealing—red-handed in the act. It's enough to drive a man to drink," he added grimly;—"besides—what thanks do you get from such a person?"

Edah felt the force of his words: his faithfully drawn picture made her sad, but she only replied to his last remark, as she absently gazed toward the half-open door.

"Oh, as to that—anything in the nature of gratitude or love, why, I simply let it come in the nature of a glad surprise," turning her eyes in an amused way into his face.

The words had scarcely left her lips when once again she saw a great light leap into his eyes—and she realized her doom had overtaken her—pay-day had come at last.

The barriers were down!

The flood-gates wide open!

The tide was upon her!

She put out her hand as if to stay the on-coming torrent—, but as well might that small hand endeavor to stop the waters of the Lachine Rapids in their mad rush to the sea!

The pent-up waters of his love which had been so long restrained burst forth in spite of himself or her.

He caught her outstretched hand in his and imprisoned its mate in a fierce grasp, while he said in suppressed tones, trembling with the intensity of his feeling——

“If I tell you of my love will it come in the nature of a glad surprise? Mrs. Brown! Edah! I have known for a long time that you did not wish me to say the words I’m speaking!

“For some reason unknown to me, you have not wished me to tell you of my all-consuming love!”

A low moan broke from Edah’s lips as she listened with bowed face in which mingled feeling of distress and joy struggled for the mastery.

“Yet I’m sure you were not in ignorance of my feelings toward you—and I sometimes dared hope my love was returned. Edah—dear Edah—look at me and tell me you are glad of my love,” and he lifted her down-cast face and made her look into his eyes;—intoxicated with what he saw he clasped her to his heart—kissing her on brow, cheek and lips.

The storm, which unknown to them had been gathering for a fresh outburst, now broke in intensified fury—and a swirling gust of wind blew wide the half-open door at the same time extinguishing the lamp.

The sudden noise and darkness startled Edah—rousing her to herself. She endeavored to withdraw from his arms—but was held a close prisoner while the lover whispered words that were sweet for her to hear.

“ Philip!—Philip!—I must not!—you must not!—Oh, I cannot listen to such words! ”

“ Why not, dearest, if we love each other? ” he murmured softly.

“ Listen, and I will tell you,” she groaned. But somehow the words would not come.

“ Never mind now—another time will do. What I want to hear you say is, ‘ Philip, I love you more than all the world besides.’ Can you not say it? ” whispering close in her ear.

“ Yes, I can say it with all my heart—truthfully,—and *will* say it, if then you will go away and leave me, never to return! ”

“ Edah, what madness is this? I leave you? *Never!* As well ask me to pluck out my two eyes or drive a dagger into my heart! ”

No, no—the long uncertainty is over and nothing but death shall ever part us now! ”

And the strong man fought for the great love of his life, while the woman struggled *against* hers and for her religious convictions;—the while the fierce elements waged terrific warfare on the outside.

All unheeded by them the darting, jagged lightning rent the blackness of the night and the thunder burst in crashing booms.

“ Forgive me, oh! forgive me, dearest, Philip! I have done us both a great, a terrible wrong,” sobbed the unhappy woman. “ I did not fully realize—I did not dream it would ever be like this!—and I was so happy! but now ”—

Then in an almost inaudible whisper came the words—“ My husband is living! ”

"She felt the involuntary shock that ran through his frame—

"But you don't love him,—tell me you don't love him," in accents of pain.

"I hate him!" came the words in concentrated intensity.

"Well"—in almost joyful relief, "There is nothing then to alarm us; that is easily fixed—leave it all to me."

"But," said the miserable woman, "divorce is wicked—there is no such thing!—'till death do you part"—came from her frozen lips.

The time went unheeded by—he persuading, pleading, reasoning with all the eloquence and intensity of his overmastering love—and she resisting with ever-weakening power the answering call of her heart.

But Unseen Help came to her from out the Vast Unknown.

In a final rally of strength she flung her arms about his neck and with cheek against his whispered, "Philip, with my whole heart, I love you!—more than all the world besides! Go!—Go!—and tempt me no more!"

He felt that it was final—and because of his deep, unquenchable love for her he respected her wishes.

Clasping her in a last close embrace his lips met hers in a long lingering kiss—another moment and he was gone—out into the wild, stormy night.

She stood as he left her too dazed and stunned to think or feel.

As he faced about to fasten the gate a glare of lightning lit up the scene, revealing his white, set features and wind-tossed hair.

Stretching out her hands into the darkness she cried, "Oh, Philip—Philip—what have I done!"

"Come back into this lonely life of mine—I need you—I cannot live without you!"

"I was mad to send you away!" and she strained

her ears to listen but for answer she heard only the wild screaming of the wind as it flew by—bending low the tall trees, shaking and twisting their branches in its fierce delirium.

Sinking to her knees by the couch she buried her face in her arms;—motionless—but with the agony of despair in her heart she knelt while the long moments went by.

She seemed to have lost control of her thoughts which leaped from the night-marish past out into the conjecturing future—playing with her lacerated feelings as a cat with a mouse.

In bitterness she reflected, “Would James Maxwell give up his heart’s dearest love because he was bound to me?” and she seemed to hear a wild burst of mocking laughter—Ha, ha— Ha, ha— Ha, ha-ha-ha!

The hideous sound seemed carried on the wind and left at her door-saying as it retreated, “*absurd, absurd*—ha, ha!”

Impotent rage filled her breast at thought of him who had blighted her life—and at the unfairness of it all.

“Oh, why is it,” she moaned, “that one is left to bear all the grief and suffering while the other one goes free?”

Distinct as a voice in the far corner of the room Edah heard, “What is that to thee! follow *thou* Me!”

She started in fear!—“Was it a Voice in the darkness, or did it come from her inner consciousness?”

She held her breath to listen but only a baby’s childish voice called from the bed-room, “Wa-wa, baby, wa-wa,” followed by a little sleepy whine.

Mechanically she rose in answer to its bidding. As she passed Robert’s little bed a flash of lightning brightened the room, revealing the sleeping boy stretched out in the abandon of youth—his face warm

and rosy from his slumbers and his moist curls lying back from the face which looked so like that other one.

A revulsion of feeling swept over her rendering her almost ill;—that moment she hated her boy!

She passed on to Mildred's cot and almost unconscious of what she was doing gave the child its drink and from force of habit knelt by her side and patted the little one back to sleep.

The old familiar action had the effect of somewhat calming the fierce tumult within;—that brief lull only making way for a flood-tide of remorse to overwhelm her.

"What had she done—what *had* she done!! *She had hated her boy!!*"

Going swiftly back to the sleeping child she flung herself on her knees by his side calling him all the endearing names her mother-heart could conjure up;—

"Robert—Robert—mothey's heart's dearest idol—wake up!"

"Mothey did not mean it, you know she didn't mean it. Oh, tell her that you forgive her—that you still love her!"

"Mothey was mad—was crazy with grief, or she never could have thought it."

"Wake up,—wake up! Mothey *does* love you! she wants to tell you so!"

And she drew the sleeping boy to her heart, kissing his face and neck and rounded arms—her tears falling in a blinding shower.

But the heavy sleep of childhood was hard to rouse. She put first one small, unresisting arm about her neck and then the other, saying, "Wake up—wake up, Robert, dearest,—tell mothey you love her!"

Her agonized coaxings and pleadings had their reward. The tired eyes half opened, the lips

gently parted and softly,—sweetly—came the word “mothey.”

It was enough.

With heart-breaking sobs she laid the little fellow back on his pillow and threw herself on her own bed to weep, till worn and exhausted she fell into a troubled sleep as the chickens were crowing for the morn.

She was wakened by Robert's touch and cry of, “Mothey, mothey, wake up!”

She opened her eyes and smiled reassuringly at him and started to rise, but fell back on her pillow as an involuntary groan escaped her lips.

A splitting, nauseating headache had succeeded her anguish of the preceding hours.

Her white face and swollen eyes frightened the child and he began crying.

“Mothey doesn't feel well, but she'll be all right soon,” patting the dear hand;—“get dressed and ask Mrs. Johnson if she can come over for a little while.”

That lady came and took the children home with her—saying before she went—“I'll telephone for Marie!”

“Please don't—I'll sleep this off and soon be all right.”

She did sleep and felt some better—able to crawl out to the lounge in the living-room later in the day, where she lay too miserable to think.

The sound of a man's step outside almost made her heart stop beating although she knew it was not Philip's:—she had listened for that too many times to be mistaken.

In response to her, “Come”—Jack Moore entered the room.

He involuntarily started at sight of her—then awkwardly recovering himself——

“Excuse me—I did not know you were sick.”

“I have a bad headache; sit down, won't you?”

her pulses quickening for she knew he came with a message from Philip.

"No, thank you—Philip asked me to bring this."

She was so agitated she could scarcely hold the letter which he put into her hand.

The kind, honest fellow was full of heartfelt sympathy but he could think of nothing to say. Philip had not taken him into his confidence;—but he supposed there had been a quarrel "which would soon pass over"—he hoped. He could not believe any woman in her senses would "turn Philip down."

"Is he,—is he waiting for a reply?" she stammered.

"No, he said I need not wait for one," adding as he turned to leave—"he went back home this morning."

Edah did not know whether she was most relieved or most sorry at his words.

She did not see how she could ever have read those sacred lines with Jack's eyes upon her; and yet no reply being needed, she felt a forlorn hope die out of her heart.

She steadied her voice to say, "It was so good of you;—thank you very much."

"Don't thank me—you know it's a real pleasure for me to do anything for Philip or you," and he was gone.

Remembering his friend's "cut-up" appearance and seeing Edah's white, sick face he soliloquized as he descended the steps, "it must be pretty bad."

When she heard the gate click and knew there was no possibility of his return she broke the seal of her letter and read——

SUNDAY MORNING.

MY DEARLY BELOVED EDAH:

This is only a word of farewell. I wish to say

what I did not seem to think of last evening. I want your promise to call on me if conditions are ever changed so that our earthly happiness may be complete. My attitude in life will be one of listening——

Yours till death,

PHILIP.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

DEAREST, DEAREST PHILIP:

I give you my promise that if ever I am released from this horrible bondage you shall hear from me with the speed of the lightning. May God hasten the day!

If we cannot now be one in joy and happiness we can and will be one in grief and sorrow.

Forgive—forgive—dear Philip,

Your lonely, heart-broken,

EDAH.

The habit of her mind was too religious for her not to feel compunctions at wishing even James Maxwell dead. So she crossed out the words but left them standing: she would let Philip know she had been wicked enough to wish it.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE soft breezes of an early September day, which was neither too warm nor yet too cool, gently stirred the beautiful draperies of the open windows in the Bramhall's attractive breakfast-room.

The table was laid for their late Sunday morning meal, in the center of which a bowl of brilliant, freshly-cut nasturtiums lent their cheerfulness; and a large vase of the same lively blossoms adorned a distant corner of the room.

As Mrs. Bramhall took her place before the silver coffee urn she turned to her daughter—"Marjory, did you forget to go for your Uncle James?"

"No, Mamma, I did not forget but Ellen was helping me with my Sunday-school lesson. Shall I go now?" already starting on her errand.

At that moment the gentleman in question entered——

"Now, Marjory, see what you've done!"—making his morning salutations—"You've made your uncle late to breakfast!" gently pulling a long golden curl as he passed to his seat at her side. "I was waiting for you to fetch me!"

His sister laughed interrogatively.

"I was busy with my Sunday-school lesson," said the child, seriously.

"I don't believe you can say the golden-text"—let's hear."

"Yes, I can!" and with some stumbling and a little

assistance from her mother she got through all right.

"I do know it, don't I?" triumphantly.

"To be sure you do," and James Maxwell gave his niece an indulgent smile and pressed her plump little hand to his lips.

After a little desultory talk between the two men his sister said, "Virginia called up last evening and said Dr. Blank was in the city and was going to speak at our church this morning, don't you want to go with me, Addison doesn't care to go?"

"I'm just dying to—you know! But how comes it Virginia seems to be so well informed?—I did not know she had such an absorbing interest in church affairs."

"Now, James, why will you always persist in misunderstanding Virginia? This was not an 'absorbing interest,' although she is a dear, good Christian girl. I called up to ask her to dine with us to-day. She said she was sorry she couldn't come as they had out-of-town guests and it was through them she heard of Dr. Blank's appointment to preach."

He understood her pet scheme in relation to himself and Virginia Wellborne and he also knew it was a hopeless little romance on her part.

He was always sorry to disappoint his sister when it could be avoided so he hastened to say——

"It's all right, Cis,—I'll go if you like"—but inwardly he made a wry face.

It was quite late when they entered the church. Instead of Dr. Blank a fresh-faced, comely-looking young man occupied the pulpit and was already launched on his theme which they soon discovered to be relative to Sunday-school work and bristling with statistics.

What James Maxwell ever came to hear had to be said in forceful terms of invincible logic or in silvery, musical, poetical cadences of tender love and hope.

Mrs. Bramhall did not dare look at her brother—he seemed to emanate disgust. She resigned herself to an hour's boredom and let her thoughts flit out in any and every direction.

His thoughts too, were roaming at random and he only heard an occasional punctuating word: but presently something fell on his ear which had the effect of rousing him most completely.

The speaker was saying, "If you will excuse the digression, I should like to tell you of something which made a most profound impression upon me.

"As I was visiting a small town in the west on my itinerary, early in the summer, I came across an example of simon-pure Christianity in the person of a young woman who is so loved in the community in which she lives that rich and poor alike cannot say too much of her self-sacrificing labors among them.

"There is a whisper of an unfortunate tragedy before she came—a stranger—among them;—that her present life is one of atonement.

"Whatever of truth there may be in the rumor, it only makes her deeds shine out with greater luster.

"Besides her own beautiful boy, she has taken two babies to care for after nursing the mother in her last illness.

"She must be a person of some means for she herself employs a nurse to help her with the sick among the poor who are unable to pay for such services.

"Yet one would not suspect it.

"I was permitted to visit her in her home and found her living a life of the greatest simplicity—her own hands doing even the most menial work.

"The cheerfulness and happiness radiating from that center might well be envied in many a palatial home.

"And I thought as I went from her little dwelling,

of the words of our Saviour—‘She hath done what she could.’

“And I began to question myself, ‘could that be said of me? can it be said of you?’”

“How many are there among us who are doing *all* they can in obedience to the Divine Commands and to hasten that ‘great day of our Lord?’”

The speaker went back to his theme and statistics—but James Maxwell did not go back to his abstraction.

Something within him forced the conviction that the speaker was referring to no other than Edah. He called himself a “fool” to think such a thing—“weak,”—“sentimental”—“afflicted with megrims!” “the world was large and there were many young women in it!”

But it made him unsettled.

Since that chance meeting a year and a half ago there were times when he could not get her and her beautiful boy out of his thoughts.

He left the church with his sister, thoroughly perturbed and absorbed and came near failing to see Virginia—would have done so had it not been for his sister’s timely warning—a whispered “there’s Virginia”—as she passed with her friends on the way to her waiting car.

He handed his sister into their machine—seated himself by her side and crossed his arms over his breast in his most “formidable and unapproachable attitude,” according to his sister.

Aimée herself nodded gaily to her friends while the car was slowly making its passage through the many vehicles.

As they sped along the smooth boulevard in the delightful September sunshine she sniffed the warm air and thoroughly enjoyed living. But she loved to chat with someone—most of all with her brother—

so she remarked tentatively—"he was quite in earnest and full of his subject and not so bad looking either."

"I dislike so much juvenility in the pulpit! What does *he* know?"

"Well," lightly, "he seemed to have plenty of statistics to bear him out, besides, I think, perhaps, he's older than he looks."

She could not have hit upon a more unfortunate remark.

James Maxwell in his self-communings had made the startling discovery that he was *actually jealous* of the good-looking young theologian in spite of all the uncertainty!

He never dreamed that he—man of the world that he was, who had always been able to love or let it alone according to the dictates of his will—could ever come to a time when he found himself enthralled and quite without the pale of his judicial restraint.

In silence they finished their ride.

Later in the day he was closeted in his office for some time with a harmless-looking man who had brown hair and mustache and wore a business suit of gray.

That evening the young minister was waited upon by a man in a suit of gray who had "been so interested in his discourse that morning!"

When the same individual left at the close of the interview he was in possession of the general outline of the young minister's travels during the past summer and also the possessor of many valuable details as well.

There were sounds of loud and continued wailing issuing from Castle Industrie.

The good, kind neighbor, whose heart reached out in tender sympathy for the beloved mistress in her unspoken grief, hurried over from her own kitchen.

Upon her entrance the loud crying ceased for the moment, while both children turned to look at the newcomer, giving Edah a chance to say, "Did you hear the soiree, you dear Swedish Angel of Mercy? you are just in time," putting Mildred into her arms, wrapped in the bath towel to be polished off.

Robert was holding up a bleeding finger and beginning to cry afresh.

"Come now, mothey will fix it: It isn't so very bad," leading the child into the bath-room. As the blood was washed away and the cut hidden from sight he gradually quieted down.

Mildred too, finding there was nothing she really *had* to cry about became quite calm and tranquil.

"I do not want you to get your finger wet, so mothey'll finish washing the dishes when Mildred is in bed."

Lighting the lamp on the table in the sitting-room she left Robert to amuse himself while she carried Mildred off for the night.

Mrs. Johnson meanwhile completing Robert's unfinished task.

Edah's perception was not quite so keen as usual these days—her eyes not so quick to notice or she might have guessed there was something on her neighbor's mind.

The fact was Lena Johnson had been hesitating about speaking to her of a strange man with a brown mustache, wearing a suit of gray, who had stopped at her side gate a few days previous and talked some little time with Robert.

She knew Edah would have wished her to tell, but she couldn't bear to add a grain of worry to her sorrowing friend—besides she hoped Robert had done so. So she simply redoubled her own vigilance and remained silent.

The incident had escaped the child's mind—in fact

it had made no impression for he often talked to passers-by from his perch on the side-gate post.

The detective, for such it was, had been given instructions to find a "tall woman with fresh, rich coloring, brown eyes and indescribable hair of gold and brown, etc., etc."

When he saw the lad he had a great light and thought to himself, "why interview the lady? he was in possession of facts of which Mr. Maxwell had been strangely reticent!"

..... When Mrs. Johnson started to leave, Edah followed her to the door, her eyes full of the gratitude she could not speak, and she patted her friend's cheek in an affectionate way she often had of doing by way of thanks.

Mrs. Johnson called back over her shoulder as she stepped out into the dark—"If you need me, I come."

Her neighbor had said that several times lately, but she thought it was only another way of expressing her sympathy.

She had only been gone a few minutes when she returned with her big dinner-bell which she used to summon her husband to his meals.

"I brang this,"—lapsing as she sometimes did in her speech—setting the bell down on the dining-room table.

When she had again departed, Edah, wondering a little over the incident, sat down by her boy for their half-hour together.

Sometimes she read aloud to him, or there was a lesson, or they just simply talked—had their tender little confidences.

He persistently asked, "why Philip did not come."

"Isn't this Saturday night, and won't Philip soon come?" or

"I want to show him the box I'm making—I believe he'll think it's good!"

“Will he come to-morrow, mothey?”

Edah thought she would go wild if Philip were the topic of conversation this evening.

She was tired—the day had been a busy one: besides the regular duties she had been attending to some fall matters—getting things ready for winter and since Philip had gone out of her life everything seemed burdensome.

“Come now, Robert,” as the clock struck the hour, “I’m going to help you with your bath so you won’t get your finger wet.”

Although he very much preferred, ordinarily, to do it himself he was glad of the offer this evening.

When the last affectionate good-night had been said she took off her large apron and hung it in the bath-room as she passed through, and came out into her lonely living-room, standing some moments abstractedly beside her work-table.

Although well on in September, the day had been warm and she wore one of the one-piece white dresses Philip had liked: the elbow sleeves made it convenient when bathing the children.

This was the hour in all the day she found hardest to get through and she dreaded its nightly re-appearance.

Rousing herself she resolutely drew the work-basket toward the front of her table, opened her “Longfellow” at the place and used one of Mildred’s little shoes as a marker.

She had gotten into the way since Philip had gone out of her life, of committing to memory some choice bit of poetry from one of her favorite authors—partly to fill in the time—but more so as not to think.

To-night she chose

“Come to me, O ye children!
And whisper in my ear

What the birds and the winds are singing
In your sunny atmosphere.

Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems
And all the rest are dead."

Still reluctant she stood—motionless—a paralyzing inertia was upon her; then dropping into her low chair—Robert not being there to see—she buried her face in her two hands and tearless, let the full tide of her misery sweep over her.

The sound of a step on the gravel startled her;—her hands dropped into her lap—"Oh, how *can* I go anywhere to-night!" as she rose to answer the firm knock.

'Twas no messenger to enlist her sympathy and service in behalf of the sick that confronted her!

She stood face to face with—James Maxwell!!

She fell back a step and grasped the back of a chair for support—pale and trembling, wide-eyed with fear.

He had seen her through the window as he passed up the walk, in her attitude of sorrowful dejection and it had touched his heart.

In a voice tense with feeling, "Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Brown—my errand is a peaceful one," asking as he stepped inside, "may I come in?"

At the sound of that voice, the blood bounded back into her veins and forty furies strained at their leashes within her.

All the wrong and suffering she had endured at his hand, at sight of him formed an alchemy in her soul producing intensest hate.

With flashing eyes her gaze met his but her compressed lips remained silent.

He walked to the table and laid his hat down, then turning drew Edah's low rocker over to her side ask-

ing her to be seated and placed a chair for himself opposite.

She sat down as he requested, feeling too weak to remain standing and waited for him to speak.

The silence grew oppressive.

Unable to bear it longer she said in low, concentrated hatred, "May I inquire why this honor?"

"I came on a matter of business and I trust you will pardon the intrusion."

Her hands spasmodically clenched, while she inwardly resolved that only over her dead body should he ever get Robert.

He paused—finding it difficult to proceed in the face of her outraged manner.

Presently rising he began pacing back and forth the length of the room——

"The truth of the matter is, I have come to make you a proposition of marriage," pausing in front of her.

If a bomb had suddenly exploded beneath her she could not have been more surprised.

Continuing his walk—"Mrs. Brown, since the day I made my confession to you in Biloxi, I have suffered the tortures of the damned and I wish to make what tardy reparation I can for the great wrong done you."

She waited so long before replying that he broke the silence by repeating, "Mrs. Brown—I ask you to be my wife."

To her dying day Edah never knew what made her say, "I should think your sister would be delighted to welcome me into the family!"

She had scarcely ceased speaking ere she was sorry.

Never in all her sufferings had she since thought of those bitter words, look and tone Mrs. Bramhall had used that awful night in which she was told to

“Go!”—they had lain hidden away under more vital sorrows, regrets, insults—to spring unbidden into the present.

“My sister—but never mind,—we are not speaking of her.”

The hard, bitter look went out of Edah’s face—it was a stranger there, did not belong—and the sorrowful, hopeless expression she had worn since Philip went, came back instead.

“Mr. Maxwell,” with the pathetic little droop to her mouth he remembered so well, “I would like to withdraw that remark; will you please consider it unsaid?”

He had an almost overmastering desire to clasp her in his arms, but he only bowed his head—inwardly wondering at the change.

“In reply to your question, I thank you for your consideration—your *generous magnanimity!*”—the fierce look coming back into her eyes—“but there are insuperable barriers to a compliance with your request.”

She noted a fleeting expression pass over his face, whether of relief or disappointment she could not say—his face seemed so inscrutable at times—besides she was much too excited to be a very close observer.

“Is there—Mrs. Brown, may I ask if you are married?” and involuntarily his eyes glanced at the open door of the bed-room as if expecting to see a man emerge from within.

Edah shook her head by way of reply.

He sat waiting for her to proceed, with his arms folded across his breast looking at her with a fixed and steady gaze which she found most uncomfortable, indeed.

She could not think what she had to say—what she *must* say—with those keen eyes trying to pierce her inmost soul.

Never had she been so glad to hear Mildred's little wail!

As she knelt by the child's small cot, humming their sleepy song and gently patting her, she had time to somewhat tranquilize herself and arrange her thoughts. For she realized fully the critical situation which confronted her.

During her absence James Maxwell glanced about the room—surprised at what he saw and realizing more than ever how different she was from other women whom he knew.

The room was attractive in its simple appointments—cheerful, cosy and comfortable. There were the many windows with their fresh muslin curtains looped back to give light to the pots of growing plants in brackets by their sides—the roomy lounge with its bright covering and inviting pillows; the woven rag rugs of harmonious shades, partially covering the linoleum floor—but above all the group of framed illuminated thoughts—made the place distinctive, unusual, and seemed a very part of Edah herself.

He noted the shelves containing works of her favorite authors and the open book on the table with the small shoe resting on the page—the mechanical toys evidently belonging to his boy—with the work-basket of the mistress sitting conveniently near.

The low humming ceased, and the scrutiny of inspection as well, and the couple returned to their respective places; only Edah took up some sewing and gave hands as well as eyes something to do while she said the things that must be said.

“Will you kindly tell me what you mean by there being ‘insuperable barriers?’”

“Mr. Maxwell, you have made me an honorable, straightforward proposition and I will do the best I can to speak plainly, candidly and honestly in reply.”

She brushed one hand across her eyes as if to see

more clearly then went on—"By all the laws of righteousness, which I strive to make the law of my life—you are already my husband."

He gave a start of surprise which even *his* long schooling could not prevent while "Edah!" broke from his astonished lips in low vibrant tones as he made a gesture toward her—reaching out his hand.

She drew away from him but the interruption confused her.

Recovering—"but I do not think for one moment that I am your wife. So under no consideration other than this can we ever be re-united.

Return to your earlier wives and make the same offer—beginning with the first, your only *real* wife—you have just made me.

If all are since married, or no one will live with you—you may then return to me."

He sprang from his chair electrified!—horrified!—and the words "monstrous!!"—"indecent!"—came to his lips but died away unspoken;—for with a sudden and great illumination he realized they might equally well be applied to himself.

But he was angry—angry to a white heat!

"Mrs. Brown—no one has ever dared to speak to me like this before! If you were a man——!!" but he did not finish—he could no longer control his voice.

He continued his rapid walk for a time in silence—while she made a pretense of sewing with hands that trembled so she could scarcely hold her needle.

He broke the silence saying in a sneering, cutting tone, "and may I ask where you received your information? or is it only a way to force a confession?"

By God! I've never made anyone my father confessor,—save once, more fool I,—and I'll not begin now!"

She had thrown a shell into the enemy's camp and the explosion was not unexpected.

She stood by her guns with as much composure as she could command.

After his second violent outbreak James Maxwell stepped outside in the cool night air.

Relieved of his presence she rose and passed into the dining-room—her eyes fell on the bell, and a flash of meaning connected it with her evening visitor.

Always that fear for Robert, came stronger than ever to her mind, and her pulses almost stopped beating as she thought, “was this a trick to engage her attention while some accomplice entered the window and stole her boy?”

She fled through the bath into the bed-room as fleet of foot as a deer, only to find him calmly, peacefully sleeping.

When she returned to the living-room James Maxwell was standing there,—a self-contained man of the world once more,—a power of reserve-force making itself felt in his every attitude and motion.

Very courteously and quite matter of fact, “Mrs. Brown may I take the liberty of going in to see our—your boy before I leave?”

She was startled—quite taken aback by this sudden change.

She only gave a silent bow—moving swiftly in the direction of the dining-room, as he disappeared from sight to be in easy access of the bell if it were needed.

She heard him move across the room and she understood he had gone to fetch the small glow-lamp which stood on a stand in the far end of the room.

Several minutes passed while she stood in breathless suspense—then she heard him retrace his steps—probably replacing the light, before he emerged from the room.

Taking up his hat he gave her a very formal, respectful bow and disappeared into the night.

She turned the key in the door and fell on her

knees beside the couch—weak and trembling from the interview and buried her face in the pillows while a thankful, “Saved!—Saved!” floated on high.

When she arose she felt almost lighthearted;—too relieved to even wonder where he came from—how he found her out—or anything else—only that she was saved!

With her gratitude something took definite shape which before had been only hazy and undefined in her brooding, grief-stricken mind.

But the interview had left her nervous and agitated and her sleep that night was fitful;—’twas a series of dozings and wakings;—starting up into a sitting posture at the end of each little cat-nap to see if Robert were still there.

The next morning she carried the bell home to her neighbor’s, saying, “I did not have to use it, you see.”

She thought in this way to prepare an opening for Lena Johnson to tell what led up to her uneasiness in regard to herself and Robert.

“It had something to do with her visitor of last night *that* she was sure,” and she began to grow extremely curious in regard to it.

“I tank you better keep it.”

“Why, Lena, you are not usually so nervous—has anything happened to rouse your fears?”

Then the story came out ending with, “you feel so bad I did not like to make you worry.”

“It is all right”—putting her arm about her friend, “but we will both be on the watch—be sure and tell me if you see anything more.”

“My old man say a buggy stood out by our side gate about an hour last night—and I was scared.”

“Yes,” said the young woman, “I had a caller, a man from out of town,” and no more was said about it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE following Sunday as Edah was putting the finishing touches to their dinner Robert shouted from the window of the living-room, " Mothey—here comes Marie! " and ran outside to meet her.

He gave her a noisy welcome, which pleased the lady very much for she had grown immensely fond of him which feeling was fully reciprocated by the child.

It usually is: love begets love with children and sometimes with grown-ups too.

Edah called from the dining-room, " We're all glad—have off your things—dinner is just ready. Come, Robert, bring up a chair for Marie and fill the glasses "—while she added the extra plate, knife, fork, spoon, etc.; then putting Mildred into her high chair by her side they all gathered about the table, talking pleasantly together along lines in which Robert could have a part.

After the dinner things were cleared away Robert carried Marie off to his work-shop to show her a tiny little sled he had been struggling with under Eric's supervision.

" I think Philip will like it—don't you? " queried the child.

" I'm sure he will; " wondering for the hundredth time why it was the young man's visits had ceased—and feeling so sorry for her friend whom she could plainly see was so sad and dismal.

"I'm going to visit now with mothey but I'll come and say good-bye before I go."

These visits between the nurse and Edah had come to be very much enjoyed by both and a bond of tender sympathy had grown up between them.

Marie was willing to accept as much of Edah's self as she felt disposed to give—did not ask or expect confidences and Edah in return loved her because she was willing to do that very thing.

While they talked intimately of her work—every detail of which was of deep interest to Edah—there was never any mention made of "Cases."

On the first occasion Edah had quickly asked, "Did you say Johnny Burke has measles?" Somehow since her nursing days she had a prejudice against the word.

Marie was quick to "catch on" and there was never any more "cases" discussed,—although very often the latter sought her friend's advice and counsel and often many a vigil was shared by Edah in stressful, critical times when it was so she could leave her home.

As they sat together on the steps of the little piazza in the soft, September air—forming an artificial barrier between Mildred, who was running about, and too unlimited freedom—Edah said, "You have been so busy lately, I think you need a rest"—smiling a little—"and I'm going to propose your coming to spend a few days with us;—I'm not altogether disinterested as you will see as I proceed."

"I shall like it you may be sure—not that I'm unduly tired—and if there is anything I can do—"

"Yes, that's it; Robert and I are going away for two or three days and I should like to leave Mildred with you. The object of our trip is a profound secret—do you mind?" and Edah smiled inquiringly—"I'm not even telling Lena Johnson."

"All right," laughed Marie, "secrets are always interesting even when I'm on the outside."

So it was arranged she was to come the next day but one.

Robert was in a state of excitement when told an hour before traintime of his mother's intentions regarding himself.

When Eric drove the wagon around in front of the house the whole family stood outside to witness the departure.

Many a journey around the world has been taken with less of interest—concern—attending its beginning.

It was such a rare thing for Edah to be away from her little home—never on social visits and for entertainment—seldom even going to the village to make her simple purchases—her wants being few and small and often attended to through her kind friends or over the neighborhood telephone.

Robert ran gleefully out and climbed into the waiting wagon all by himself, Lena Johnson following with the traveling bag.

Edah took baby Mildred from Marie's arms—"You don't know how I hate to leave the dear, little midget even for a day or two," kissing the child fondly.

With a final squeeze she handed the child back to Marie and bidding the two women good-bye took her seat beside Robert and they were off.

"She seems more like herself than for weeks," said Marie as they went back into the house together and both women were glad.

Edah enjoyed the trip because of the delight Robert took in everything he saw—and his bright, sparkling, wide-open eyes did not miss many things.

The couple were the objects of much notice from their fellow-travelers, as was always the case when they were abroad together.

After the few hours' journey they landed in the great city, the sights and sounds of which recalled to Robert's mind many incidents of their visit there a year and a half-ago and which he so interestedly chatted about to his mother's amused delight.

It was too late to attend to the business which had called her thither that day, but early the next morning they took a cab and drove to the nearest orphan asylum.

Upon making known her errand she was shown into a great room where there were little babies and big babies, fat babies and lean—fair ones and homely; some sad-eyed and forlorn looking—others not so much so, but they all appealed to Edah: and as she gazed about her at the pathetic little faces, heart-hungry for mother love, she longed for the great army of semi-young women,—whom men had sentenced to spinsterhood,—to look upon what she at that moment saw.

Each were so sadly in need of the other—and the thing that stood between must be that of which her friend had so often spoken—"the economic independence which women lacked."

Presently her eye caught sight of one that really almost made her sick with pity.

"Oh!—is it ill?" as she noted the unhealthy color, domey head, bulging forehead, weazened features, pale blue eyes, pinched nose and thin puckered lips.

They walked closer to the cot on which it lay and the nurse turned back the covering and Edah saw that the little limbs had taken the shape of the chair in which his young life had been spent!

She caught her breath with a half sob—"Oh-h!"

"Yes, it is pitiful. The mother, a widow by desertion, died a couple of days ago and little Billy was brought here. There were two or three other children but they were older."

"I want to take this one," with tears standing in her eyes.

The nurse looked at the handsome boy by her side and marveled, but she only said, "the doctor took measurements this morning to have some braces made"—

"Well," interrupting, "they can be sent later, can't they?" mentally resolving that the manipulation of her own two hands would be brought more often into requisition than any painful braces.

When all the formalities and preliminaries had been attended to Robert and Edah found themselves on their return trip with the little, crippled, sixteen-months' old Baby Billy with them.

"We will love him hard—hard—won't we Robert?—because we haven't any Danny now—and he is such a poor, dear fellow who cannot straighten out his legs nor walk."

The spring wagon and Mr. Johnson were at the station to meet them when the train stopped and the child was even more glad to return than he had been to leave and his joy at sight of his friend pleased that individual overmuch—but it was not his way to show his feelings and one unacquainted with him might not have guessed how much of pleasure he experienced at the boy's return.

But Edah knew the quiet, taciturn man and understood.

"See my new baby, Mr. Johnson," as she held the soundly sleeping child in her arms for his inspection;—"will you please hold him while I get in?"

Her two friends understood the "secret" when they saw Edah riding up to the gate with a baby in her arms.

"Look! Marie—Lena—did you ever see anything more pathetic?" handing the sleeping child to the nurse while she descended and gave an assisting hand

to Robert: and as she laid the baby on the lounge she threw aside the covering and drew up the little dress exposing the crippled legs.

"Poor tang!"

"Oh, Mrs. Brown! Do you think they can ever be straightened?"

"I think so—hope so,—but it will take time and work."

And true enough work there was plenty.

He was a quiet, patient little thing—having had a long, severe course of training in those virtues, in which he learned to accept whatever was given or withheld in the way of care and attention.

It was most pathetic to Edah to see this dull acquiescence and almost imbecile manner.

Many—many times a day were those stiffened knees rubbed and an effort made to bend them, which was not only torture to the little patient, but sympathetic suffering to the manipulator as well.

Her days were so busy there was no time in which to think of her sorrow—no time for brooding and grieving—but when evening came and quiet settled over the house, tired though she was—her loneliness and desolation would sweep over her.

Everything spoke of Philip and happier evenings.

The season of thankful joy over her deliverance from a terrible fate had passed and the sorrowing and longing for Philip had returned with augmented force.

"Mrs. Johnson," said Edah, looking in upon her neighbor a few mornings after her return, "I'm expecting a small express package, do you think you could find time to look after my little flock while I walk to the village and back?"

"Yes, I'll come right over."

Edah hastened along—heavy-hearted but swift of foot: time was a valuable asset these days.

She arrived at the small station as the belated morning express came thundering in.

She stepped inside the unattractive little waiting-room, now quite deserted, and stood waiting till the one factotum in the express-telegraph office should have been through with the few moments of confusion and bustle attendant upon the train's arrival.

As the panting, quivering engine came to a full stop, two men alighted: one swung lightly from the day coach near the station door while the other emerged from a pullman further down the track.

The latter had some baggage he was arranging for with the waiting driver of the one express wagon the town afforded.

The man without any impedimenta gave a quick glance up and down the platform and with long, swinging strides crossed over and entered the dingy waiting-room.

"Edah!"

"Philip!"

The next moment, with cap under his arm he was holding her two hands in his; both too excited—overjoyed to say more—they stood silently gazing into each other's eyes.

At this juncture, the other traveler, having disposed of his luggage came forward to send a telegram.

He did not get beyond the door, for there, standing some distance back into the room and opposite him, he saw the woman he had come to love above everyone else, giving to another the looks he craved for himself.

These two were quite oblivious of him—of the whole world—and he contrasted in his mind a vision of the self-contained—sad—dispirited-looking woman he had so recently seen, with this transformed being, who radiated joy and happiness from every feature.

To her companion he gave only a fleeting glance of scorn.

As the two began talking in low tones he retreated—carrying with him a picture on his mental retina that was destined to be very lasting.

“Oh, Philip! you are ill!” recovering from her first, glad, speechless surprise.

“Sick for sight of you—dearest,” reading also in her face the marks of suffering.

“I did not expect this” he went on; “it is the first time I’ve been here since—July. I’m leaving on the other line at two, for Brander, where I’m on a job.”

After a moment’s pause he added huskily, “it has been a long time.”

With a great longing, entreating look in his tender eyes—“tell me—Edah—is there—may I not hope?”

His tones thrilled her through and through and she lowered her eyes before his pleading gaze as she mournfully shook her head, saying in tones of despair—“I’m without hope myself.”

They were silent again, as the sad words echoed and re-echoed through their hearts.

Presently she lifted her brimming eyes to his and in an unsteady voice asked, “Do you—can you forgive me dearest, Philip, for all this pain and suffering?—I now see and understand wherein I have done a great wrong to you as well as to myself: but it is the year of my life that will ever stand out in my memory as being nearest Heaven—the only one in which I really lived or ever expect to live.”

She was clasped close in his arms while the words came low, “there is nothing to forgive! but if there were you know you would be absolved of all blame in my thoughts.”

Then with a lingering kiss he released her—and so they parted.

As they passed on their way out they saw the back

of the telegraph operator through the ticket window and heard the click of the keys, but Edah had forgotten what she came for.

How she ever got home she scarcely knew but once there, plunged into her work with intense energy giving herself no time in which to think.

After the disquieting picture he saw, James Maxwell,— for it was he, turned on his heel and walked down the platform.

Going on to the one livery barn in the place he asked for a riding horse. 'Twas a poor selection from which to choose but he ordered one sent to the boarding-house which was also the village hotel.

Some little later the people on the street and those standing in door-ways saw a gentleman in city riding-garb gallop through the main thorough-fare of the town, heading northward.

The horse was blessed with powers of endurance if nothing else, otherwise it would have given out trying to keep pace with James Maxwell's fierce thoughts.

As he rode swiftly along lanes lined with great fields of ripened corn, he argued the question from both sides;—that is, from his inclination to adhere to what he desired or the other, to withdraw silently from the field and abandon his desires in favor of his wounded pride and vanity.

“ And leave the position open to that cur of a walking delegate? ”

The very thought sent the weight of preponderance in the direction of his affections and his spurs into his horse's flank.

After James Maxwell had returned to his home from his interview with Edah two or three weeks before, he began to think he had been too hasty.

The occasion of his anger still rankled—“ it certainly was most unusual and unbecoming in a young

woman to make such a demand upon a man who was offering a sacrifice of such magnitude!"

"No other woman he had ever met would do it—say such things." But then he had to admit to himself, "that she was not like other women"—which was perhaps her chief source of attraction for himself.

As one day followed another he grew miserably sorry—wretched.

Try as he might he could not rid himself of her image.

Sometimes he saw her as she stood under the live-oak tree holding her—*their*—golden-haired boy by the hand.

Again he saw her dejectedly sitting alone in her little home as he caught sight of her through her cottage window.

Whatever the vision it was always alluring.

Finding it impossible to shake off the "spell" or whatever it was which was unfitting him for business, he determined to make another attempt to win this woman who appealed to him as no woman before had ever done.

As he rode along the country road this bright Fall day all his former conflict was revived to further embarrass the situation.

Usually when James Maxwell reached a decision he stood by it, but this unexpected vision had unsettled him—although the detective had prepared him for the remote possibility of such a contingency by speaking of a lover whom report had pictured as "down and out."

Once again he saw himself in his exclusive circle—one of the bright and shining dignitaries in that orbit—whom any woman would be glad to accept upon invitation.

Without undue egotism on his part he could name

a score or more of women, "who were not only willing but ready and waiting!"

"Why displease his sister and bring out of the dead past things that would shame and humiliate both? It had lain hidden from view all these years, along with other deviations from the path of rectitude, why disturb it?"

"He would return to his home in the city and have done with it all! settle down with Virginia Wellborne to a life of usefulness—have a family and cease thinking of the matter."

A revulsion of feeling told him even the thought was unendurable!

"He wanted Edah!—Would have her! and again came the picture, he had seen in the waiting-room—

"Damn that walking delegate!!" he muttered half aloud.

He pulled up his heated animal, took off his hat and wiped his perspiring forehead. He turned about in the saddle and for the first time cast his eyes over the country through which he had been riding.

From the top of the little hill where he paused he could see great fields of cured corn as far as the eye could reach—dotted at intervals with the homes of the farmers with their adjacent orchards and occasional meadow land.

Turning his horse about at the end of a few minutes he rode back more leisurely, and a few minutes before one o'clock alighted from his very dejected-looking mount at the stable entrance.

Double pay was demanded on account of the horse's appearance which was unhesitatingly acceded to by the silent and rather stern-looking rider.

Edah sat in the dark, when the interminable day was at last ended, with only the red glow from her base burner lighting the room.

A crimson spot burned bright on either cheek and

the glitter in her eyes told of the nervous tension under which she had labored the past hours.

Her unexpected meeting with Philip and his looks of suffering had completely unnerved her and now in the quiet hour all her loss and loneliness—her deep and unavailing love for Philip—swept over her with fresh intensity.

“Doing right was O, so hard!”

“If Mrs. Williams were only here—!”

Despairing she craved an earthly friend who could sympathize—understand—counsel!

So absorbed was she in her unhappy reflections she did not hear the opening of the gate nor approaching footsteps till they sounded on her little porch almost simultaneously with a knock at the door.

She was about to say, “Come”—when she realized she was without a light, so she arose and opened the door.

Even in the dim light she had no difficulty in recognizing the gentleman who confronted her with bared head and hat in hand.

Too dumfounded to speak or even move—she blocked the entrance.

“Good-evening, Mrs. Brown,”—in James Maxwell’s most polite tones.

His words roused her and she stepped back, giving him an opportunity to enter the room.

Mechanically she turned about and started to light the lamp.

“Let me”—he urged—depositing his hat on the table, and taking a match from his pocket.

Somehow in the process their hands touched.

’Twas as if a spark of electricity had suddenly changed his arterial fluid into liquid fire.

If there had remained a lingering doubt in his mind as to his feelings for her, they were forever dispelled.

He faced the fact that he was wildly, madly in love with this woman while *she loved another!*

The touch had roused no answering response within her.

He stood a few moments by the table in silence—waiting to regain his normality; then in a grave voice began—

“I have come to report!—I followed your advice—command—and I found my *earlier wives were all dead!*” ending in a serio-comic tone.

But Edah saw nothing humorous in the remark. With a terrible sinking of the heart she thought, “Fool—fool! I might have known!”

“He did not *want* any other of his concubines! *He wanted her!*”

“Oh, what can one person hope to accomplish in such a tangled web of wrong!”

He drew her low chair forward and asked her to be seated, but she preferred to remain standing—half leaning, half sitting—against the table for support, her fingers tightly interlaced.

Standing in front of her he said with deep feeling—“Mrs. Brown let me atone for the miserable past! Let a life of loving devotion make reparation for the great wrong done you!”

“Mr. Maxwell,” in a dull dreary monotone—“let us not speak of love—and what is past is past. You might have been able once to make right the wrong, but that time has long since gone by. The joy and comfort in my dear boy has been a solace—all that I ever expect to know or have.”

“And a consciousness of loyalty to righteous conviction,” he added softly.

He surprised her into looking at him—the first time her eyes had met his compelling glance—but she turned quickly away.

He began again—“If not for your own sake—then

for Robert's sake listen to me. You know what our marriage would mean for him!"

"Alas! she knew only too well. As the world looked at the matter and as Robert himself might come to see it——!" there she stopped breathless.

For herself she dared defy the '*great established order of things as they are!*' But for Robert it was different. She could sacrifice her life—everything—for his dear sake—but—she must find out if she could what was the right—*that* must come even before her precious boy!"

"Oh, if I only knew—if—I—only—knew!!"

The confusion—the complexity of it all was maddening.

She tried to pray but the atmosphere of prayer was not present.

Suddenly before her mind's eye rose a picture of a fresh, young virgin maid—standing before the altar in orange-blossoms and white—emblems of purity—by the side of this man, while a high ecclesiastic with much pomp and ceremony would say "I pronounce you man and wife, *what* GOD *therefore* hath joined together——!!!"

"So would sin and confusion evermore abound;—besides have I the right to turn a deaf ear to this man who is my husband though I may not be his wife?"

He saw by the changes in her face, from which his gaze had not shifted, that she was fighting a battle—the first signs of any hope for him.

Then he noted the final look of determination and guessed from her paleness she had decided against herself.

"Be it as you say," came from her dry lips.

Her words sent a transport of joy through his being.

He turned without speaking and walked back and

forth the length of the room, presently pausing in front of her, where she still stood as motionless as stone, he asked—

“Shall we be married here or would you rather go with me into the city to-morrow and have the wedding take place there?”

Cold, calm and level-eyed—“Were you speaking of a ceremony for *us*?”

Tremendously discomfited and terribly taken aback he could not at once reply.

“But for Robert’s sake”—he finally pleaded.

“Not even for Robert’s sake will I permit that mockery. If you choose you may remain here and share my home and be a father to Robert before the world as you are in actual fact,”—scarcely recognizing the sound of her own voice.

In fact she had the queer, creepy feeling as if she were somebody else other than herself.

That was her ultimatum and nothing he could say was able to change it.

“If you loved me would that still be your decision?”

She bowed her head in reply.

He continued to walk back and forth with his hands in his pockets and his eyes bent on the floor trying to decide whether or not he would ever be able to change the situation even after he had won her love.

Lack of confidence in himself not being one of James Maxwell’s characteristics, he concluded to accept her terms.

Taking up his hat he prepared to leave.

“Shall I come to-morrow, or would you prefer some other day?”

“It cannot possibly matter,” said the strange voice of the other woman who was not she herself.

With a bow he was gone.

Numb and cold in body and spirit she drew a chair close to the fire and sat looking with unseeing eyes into its brightness.

She could not think;—she had passed the power of suffering.

Thus unthinking she sat till the fire made her drowsy and when once in bed deep unconciousness was her blessed portion till morning.

She went through her usual round of work and gave the same tender solicitude to the children's wants and needs. But there was a sort of desperation deep down within her that seemed to portend approaching doom.

As the day wore on she found herself growing nervous and startled over every sound. By late afternoon it had become almost unendurable and she ran into her neighbor's with the request—

"Dear Mrs. Johnson could you watch over the children for a half hour or so; I have such a headache and I thought perhaps a little walk might do me good. And—and Mrs. Johnson I'm leaving Robert with you too?"

"That's all right—I tak good care."

"Would you mind bringing them over here instead?"

So the little family were made glad by a visit to their neighbor's.

The day was too cold and wet for them to play outside so Edah left without her usual misgivings.

She prepared herself for her rainy walk and directed her steps toward the cemetery.

There was nothing in the cheerless Fall day with the dead and dying leaves all about her and the half bare branches dripping with the rain to appeal to anyone—it certainly did not to her.

She turned in at the gate and walking swiftly to her favorite spot stood leaning against the wet headstone.

She turned her eyes toward Heaven and her heart cried out for help—comfort—relief—peace—but there were only clouds without and clouds within.

All she seemed to hear were the words of one of the comforters of Job—"Curse God and die!"

Her soul seemed a battleground for demons that lonely half hour in the deserted graveyard.

As she turned to retrace her steps, once again there came to her the words, "We can *suffer*—MAY *even* DIE but we MUST DO RIGHT!"

"It had saved Robert's life, and what would *her* life have been, and still be, without him?"

"If it had brought good once, it might do so again."

She knew she had honestly—earnestly—sincerely tried to do the right and a blessed calm came over her spirit,—the calmness that comes after the storm.

Walking swiftly through the darkening gloom she felt more like her normal self.

She stopped at her neighbor's and gathered her little flock about her and as the two were getting them home through the wet asked, "Did anyone come while I was gone?"

"No—there ban no one."

She busied herself with her evening duties—working swiftly and deftly, though somewhat nervously—for since Billy's advent there was so much more to be done.

But at last they were all in bed—the house was still—and she was left face to face—alone—with that suspense which had been hanging over her all day;—an expected calamity that was as terrible in its uncertain approach as in the actual realization.

The gate opened and closed—a step sounded!!

Wild-eyed and terrified—with clasped hands she glanced first at one door and then at the other—

"Philip!—Philip!—save me!"

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Edah, as miserable a mortal as the sun shone on, had the breakfast almost ready she stepped into the bed-room as was her habit, to see if Billy were awake and render what assistance was needed by Robert.

The former was still soundly sleeping and the latter struggling with his own toilet—tip-toeing about so as not to make any noise.

She bent over him for their good-morning kiss which he returned with fervor—throwing his arms about his mother's neck and making up in squeeze what the necessities of the occasion demanded in quiet.

A fleeting thought passed through her mind—"what should she say to Robert? how tell him—Robert this is your father!" But it was evanescent—"why say anything? nothing mattered now,—nothing could make it any worse."

Upon reaching the breakfast room Robert's keen eyes at once discerned the extra place at the table.

"Philip's here! Oh, goody, goody!" he shouted with suppressed joy—still mindful of the sleeping Billy.

"Where is he, mothey?" running toward the living room.

James Maxwell standing just outside the door holding Mildred by the hand, heard perfectly.

He entered the room, hesitated a fraction of a second as if for Edah to say something—and she was perfectly conscious of the omission on her part, but could not utter a word;—then with a smile and glad

look in his face said to the astonished child, who had turned at the sound of footsteps—

“Good-morning, Robert.”

The glad, expectant look died out of the boy's face as he returned the greeting soberly—wondering.

But still bent on finding Philip he continued his search, moving more slowly in the direction of the work-shop—for it began to dawn upon him that there was only *one* extra place at the table.

Failing there he returned to the breakfast room as his mother was putting Mildred in her high chair.

He took his accustomed place at the table by his mother's side without speaking.

If Edah had been less miserable she might have seen and averted the oncoming catastrophe.

Robert's keen disappointment took an aggressive turn.

Glancing first at his mother—who at that moment was engaged in pouring out a cup of coffee and did not see—he turned a look of childish dislike upon James Maxwell saying excitedly—

“That's not your place—it's Philip's place! I don't like you!—I want Philip!” and burst out crying.

Edah hastily arose and excusing herself led Robert from the room.

She wished she were a child and could scream and cry it all away—but that “something” which was clutching her heart she felt would never let go.

All this had sent a new thought into her already tortured soul;—*Philip would hear of the return of her husband*—and she knew what that knowledge would mean to him!

Pale to her lips—“Robert, my son”—she said when they were alone—drawing him to her side and wiping his tears with her handkerchief—“Mr. Maxwell is our guest, and we must always be kind to guests you know.”

The boy's disappointment had been so keen, his grief was not to be checked instantly: but presently he grew more quiet.

"Mothey must go back to the table now, will you come too?"

They returned together and Robert silently took his place again—remaining very quiet till the end of the meal.

Child as he was he understood there was a discordant element at work and he naturally laid the blame upon their unwelcome guest.

At the close of the meal James Maxwell went out on to the little front porch.

The clouds had vanished during the night and a bright autumn sun was trying to make amends for the depressing effect of the preceding day.

He lighted his cigar and stood leaning against the post alternately letting his eyes wander out over Edah's beloved view and the curling rings of smoke from his enjoyable cigar, while he planned a campaign which had for its object the capture of Robert's childish affections, and through that medium those of Robert's mother.

Meanwhile Edah dressed and carried little Billy to the table, talking to him lovingly and tenderly and pressing him close to her sympathetic heart, which was never too full of sorrow and grief to be untouched by the sight of her pathetic little cripple.

Robert cleared the table and piled the dishes ready for washing while his mother attended to Billy's wants, and later folded away the coverings of the impromptu bed on the spring-box lounge and placed Billy on it for his morning rub.

He began to cry at once—having learned what to expect.

James Maxwell re-entered the room as Edah was in the midst of her labors.

"My God!" he ejaculated looking down at the child.

Hastily divesting himself of coat and cuffs—

"Let me help," as he came close to where she was kneeling.

"It's rather low but the bed-room seemed a little too cool."

"I'll fix things."

Suiting the action to the word he pushed the lamp, books and work-basket to the back of the table and taking some of the pillows from the lounge proceeded to place the now quiet child upon them;—then he began the treatment—"doing it rather creditably Edah thought, as she stood watching a moment before going to Robert's assistance after assuring herself the child was not frightened at being treated by a stranger.

Three or four times during the day as Edah started to give the child his manipulations, did James Maxwell come to her assistance, remarking at the last one, "I believe I can detect a slight improvement since morning."

"The little knees are certainly less stiff than when I began with them—it was like trying to bend a bone!" adding softly, "poor, patient, pathetic, hopeless little fellow."

During the afternoon Robert, who had been looking out of the window suddenly turned and said in a pleading tone, "Mothey, let us go for a walk? the road is most dry."

She was sewing buttons on Mildred's new coat—"Mothey can't very well go to-day."

"Can't I go alone—just to the top of the hill?" persisted the boy.

Sometimes she had allowed him when she was on the porch where she could see—but never out of her sight since the detective episode.

"I think not to-day: if it is nice we will plan to go to-morrow."

James Maxwell looked up from the book he was reading—

"If you do not object I will be glad to accompany him?" rising as he spoke.

All Edah's fear, nay—terror—flew into her face. In a voice scarcely above a whisper, "I—I would rather he did not go."

A look of keen disappointment passed over the child's face which was followed by an expression of mutinous "why?" in his blue, rebellious eyes.

His attitude of defiance as he glanced first at one and then the other was something new in her boy and it shocked and distressed her greatly.

She had always given him a reason for her refusal and talked the matter over with him and he was so amenable to reason.

So here was another dreadful complication in the new economy of things!

But come what might she made up her mind it should never happen again. In desperation she would have to learn to trust.

Rising hastily she said, "Get your sweater on, you're going to have company in the work-shop," and catching up Mildred she was whisked into the new coat in no time.

As the trio were leaving the room, Robert, noting the omission on his mother's part turned at the door saying, "Don't you want to come too?"

"Thank you very much, Robert—" said James Maxwell with an affectionate smile—"I'll stay and keep Billy company."

Not one moment in that whole day did Edah have to herself—she was either busy with the work or occupied with the children,—their wants and needs or Robert's lessons.

The presence of a stranger had had a disquieting effect upon all, besides they had not been able to be outside much.

As Edah entered her little sitting-room that evening with Robert's good-night kiss warm on her lips, the outer door opened and James Maxwell came in from his walk to the post-office and back—bringing with him clinging reminiscences of his last cigar.

The unusual odor and the sight of his correctness and up-to-dateness of attire filled her with repugnance.

The contrast to Philip was so great. *His clothes* seemed to belong to him, yet were apparently so unimportant—so irrelevant;—his personality shone undimmed in any garb whatsoever while this man seemed to *belong to his clothes!* They were inseparable;—the setting was so ornate as to dim the luster of the gem, if gem there was!"

She walked over to the table and put in order the confused mass of things on its top and drawing her work-basket towards her seated herself and began her usual evening occupation.

He stood silently watching the deft movements—inwardly trying to compute the number of motions those same two hands had made since morning.

Presently he broke the silence—"Are all your days like this?"

"Do you mean am I always as occupied?" without looking up—"this was not washing day—ironing day—neither baking nor cleaning."

"Do you mean to say that you perform those duties in connection with what I saw to-day?"

"Why not?" coldly, "they have to be done."

"I always knew the office of motherhood was high and holy—needing infinite patience, tact and vigilance, but conscientiousness—earnestness—such as

you have thrown into it as well, certainly requires all of a woman's time.

"As my wife it will not be necessary for these other duties to be done by yourself."

He came close to her side and stood looking down upon her waiting for her to speak;—but as she remained silent he continued—"why not come with me to the city where my business interests lie—where you can get all the assistance you need? Robert can then have advantages of the best in the matter of education as he grows older.

"This home will be fine to come back to for the summer when you feel so disposed."

Again he paused.

He could not see her eyes for they were bent upon her work, but a dull red came into her cheeks and the muscles about her mouth tightened as she said in low, concentrated tones—

"I do not seem ambitious along those lines—neither have I any inclination, desire or intention of changing my habit of life."

"But if not for yourself have you no ambition for your boy?"

"Yes—I have;—but it extends only to his acquaintance with the language that speaks to humanity which can be acquired with as much facility here as elsewhere."

The tone of her voice as well as her words gave a decided air of finality to the matter.

He inwardly cursed himself for a "Fool"—"Idiot" to make such a "bungling mess" of things.

He had received his diplomatic training through and for the women who were swayed by the almighty dollar and what it stands for in ease—comfort—luxury.

This woman was different.

His methods—tactics—so successful with other

women did not fit when applied to this one particular woman.

He remained silent looking down upon her then asked, "What would you like me to read this evening?"

She indicated a volume of Tolstoy's essays and there was no more attempt at conversation for some time.

At the close of the reading he replaced the book on the shelf and gravely said, "There is one thing, Mrs. Brown—Edah,—” correcting himself—"I wish to make clear to you if possible and that is—you have absolutely nothing to fear from me concerning Robert. I do not wonder that you distrust me,"—in a constrained voice—"but if there is anything I can say to relieve your suspicions which must be most disturbing, I would like to say it."

As she did not make any reply he continued—

"I do not need to tell you of my fondness for children and anyone who could resist the attractive personality of Robert, would be a strange anomaly. I could not harm him if I would, and taking him away from his mother would be a calamity to him and an undertaking I should not like to inaugurate."

CHAPTER XX.

TEN days had elapsed since James Maxwell left his world and became an inmate of "Castle Industrie."

He had made some progress with Robert who, like any child returned kindness with kindness—but with Edah it was different. Her averted looks and distraught manner he could not help contrasting with the radiant vision he had seen in the waiting-room at the railway station.

As the little family were eating their Sunday dinner Robert suddenly looked up into his mother's face quite excited over some idea which had suddenly entered his head.

"Oh, mothey! mayn't we have—have—" he hesitated—"tell me, mothey,—you know."

"No, Robert, I don't believe I do."

"Yes—yes—mothey! you know where we sit at the table and have the wine and you tell us a story?"

"Oh, you mean communion?"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly, "that's it! can't we mothey?"

"Very well—when we have finished."

It had been her custom since coming there to have this religious ceremony once every few weeks and Robert was always glad when those times came—and since the graphophone was installed in the home he loved it still more.

After their simple dessert of baked custard and ginger cookies,—while Robert removed the remainder of the things from the table,—she cut some small

strips of bread and placed on a plate then filled three glasses with grape juice of her own bottling, one of which she placed in front of Robert and saying as she set a glass at James Maxwell's right hand, "Shall you join us in this?"

He assented.

After she had lifted Mildred out of her chair to play on the floor—leaving Billy who was always quiet—she re-seated herself saying, "It is my belief,—and I hope Robert will come to see it so,—that the home is the sanctuary where all religious ceremonies should have their observance.

"It is the place of birth—marriage—death—and this—" and a swift look of pain passed over her features as she thought of the home she had been so happy in building,—which seemed now such a dreary failure.

The last time Philip had sat opposite her and Danny was by her side.

She passed the bread in silence, seeking to compose herself before beginning.

Her voice was unsteady at first as she told once again, while they ate and drank, the wonderful story of the Man of Sorrows: weaving in the plain, simple and direct teachings with the incidents of His life. But she forgot herself in the theme, as she continued in words that Robert could well understand, winding up with the institution of this memorial feast and with Jesus' subsequent death:—at the close singing, in which Robert joined her, the verse beginning with the lines—

"Do this He said till time shall end
In memory of your dying friend."

On the first occasion Edah had been melted to tears—but Robert had slipped out of his chair and

climbing into her lap threw his arms about her neck saying, "Don't—mothey—don't cry—" looking so distressed and ready to burst out crying himself: since that time she had restrained any outward show of her emotions.

As he grew older he would sometimes, himself, shed childish tears over the pathetic recital.

But to-day when Edah had ceased speaking he hurriedly left the table and went into the other room: soon tenderly—gently—feelingly—the harmonious strains of "Nearer My God to Thee"—sung by a quartette of men's voices—floated softly through the house.

As the music began James Maxwell turned his chair sidewise to the table so as to face the other room—folded his arms across his breast and with one knee resting over the other gazed intently on the floor—seeing again the rapt, eager look of his beautiful boy as he sat spell-bound over the recital—and the pathetic expression and tender tones of the mother as she forgot all else in the remembrance of the sorrows and sufferings of the "Crucified One."

He had never been so deeply, so profoundly stirred by any religious ceremony in his whole life.

It was the most powerful sermon he ever remembered to have heard and made the most lasting impression, for she carried out in her daily life the exalted sentiment she expressed with her lips.

As for Edah when the words—

"So by my woes to be—
Nearer My God to Thee—"

fell on her ear she bowed her stately head while Heaven's own dew fell with distilling sweetness on her plowed and harrowed soul.

As the music ceased the very air was tremulous with a holy sacredness which even Robert felt.

Edah carried Billy off to finish his nap which had begun in his chair, while James Maxwell opened the screen door where Mildred had been standing in a vain endeavor to get outside, and amused her in the warm autumn sun while Robert and his mother washed up the dinner dishes.

Later—about the middle of the afternoon Edah sat with Billy on her lap—loving, petting and soothing him after an unusually painful treatment: Mildred was playing about on the floor while Robert and James Maxwell were in the work-shop.

There came a rap at the door and upon Edah's invitation Jack Moore entered.

Both were very much confused.

They had not met since that unhappy Sunday more than three months ago when he had brought her Philip's note.

She felt hurt because of what she knew he must be thinking of her in the light of her recent actions—which of course were not unknown to the villagers—and he angry because she had "played false" with Philip and "broken his heart."

He refused to be seated and stated his errand in a dry, hard voice.

"Philip has typhoid fever."

"Did he write you?" she asked in a low tone.

"No. One of the nurses I happen to know in the King's Daughters hospital at Brander wrote;—she said he was out of his head most of the time, and kept calling for you."

"Thank you very much, Jack"—with pale lips and a half-pleading look in her brown eyes which seemed to say, "Think as well of me as you can." With simple directness—"I shall leave on the first train."

As Jack Moore had entered the front door James Maxwell came into the house from the rear to get away from Robert's incessant chatter about Philip:

the sight of the tools and the surroundings always brought back to the lad memories of his hero.

Hearing a man's voice in the other room he waited by the dining-table till he had been through with his errand.

Two or three workmen had called recently in regard to matters of sickness mostly: some asking advice and one man insisting upon paying Edah something for Marie's services when that young woman had refused to accept any remuneration.

So he was greatly shocked when he learned the nature of the interview. It was so brief it was impossible to help hearing it all;—and as Jack Moore left James Maxwell also quietly withdrew.

In a roundabout way, so Robert might not discover him, he entered the meadow where the cow was grazing and walking the length of it back and forth he thought quick and fast.

The sacred feelings—holy calm which had come into his being only two or three short hours before gave place to a turbulence—fierceness—that withered the budding religious growth as a chilling blast of winter a hot-house plant exposed to its icy breath.

“So she was going to her lover!”

And again he saw the radiant vision in the waiting-room of the station—contrasting it with her averted looks and distraught manner since, and her coldness almost amounting to aversion.

“James Maxwell you're lucky that she did not accede to your wishes to be married by law!”

“You're a free man!”

The square jaw was firmly set and the blue eyes had a steely look. Even thoughts of Robert did not avail to soften that fixed expression.

Coming into the house a few moments later he saw Edah hastening about—getting some things laid out on the bed—hers and Robert's.

He waited to give her an opportunity to tell him—but she made no explanation, so he spoke in a careless tone, but watching sharply the result of his words.

“Business calls me to the city for a few days; I had thought to wait until to-morrow but think I would better go this evening.”

He might equally as well have announced the Moslem’s call to prayer for all the effect it made on her. She went on with her preparations in the same sort of dazed way as if he had not spoken.

He turned abruptly and went into the Johnsons’ where he had, soon after his arrival, engaged her front room which he used for his study and office and where he also kept his trunk; Edah’s home being rather “small and crowded,” he thought.

His bachelor apartments at his sister’s, including halls and billiard room, would contain Edah’s home twice over or more.

He packed his suit-case and went to the telephone and ordered a carriage.

When he returned to the cottage he found Robert wondering about him.

As the boy came close to his side he put his arm about his shoulders and explained that he had business calling him back to the city.

“You’ll come back soon,” looking earnestly up with his questioning blue eyes.

“I do not expect to be gone long—and you must not forget me,” and something got into his throat and voice.

“I won’t”—putting both hands into his pockets and adding wistfully—“I wish you wasn’t going.”

The arm about his shoulders tightened and he was drawn closer to his father’s side.

The sound of wheels was heard without which brought a sense of relief to this man of action.

He had been living through one of the hard moments of his life.

To do was easier than to bear.

"There's the carriage;—I wonder if I'm going to have a kiss before I leave?"

Robert gravely put his arms about James Maxwell's neck and kissed him.

There were tears in that gentleman's eyes as he took little Billy off the floor and lifted him high in the air once or twice and tweaked Mildred's little ear, in order to compose himself. Then entering the bedroom he held out his hand in farewell to Edah.

She looked up in surprise—"You're—? Oh, yes! you're going away. Good-bye,"—extending her hand without looking at him.

The next moment he was gone.

Soon after his departure Marie entered. Edah was giving Billy his bath.

Hastily laying aside hat and wrap—"Let me do that Mrs.—Edah!" exclaimed the nurse.

She had always called her Mrs. Brown—but in the light of recent events it seemed so out of place she could not utter it.

Yet Edah had made no explanations and made no comment now.

"I'm so glad you're come, Marie! I hesitated about sending for you, but did not see how I *could* leave without your being here.

Is Mrs. Briggs very badly off?"

"She has rheumatism and suffers a great deal but her daughter can do for her almost as well as I if she will," answered the nurse.

"Have you heard?" asked Edah lifting the dripping Billy into her lap.

"Yes, Jack Moore, whom I met as I was coming—told me," and her cheeks took on a glow of pink;—"are you leaving on the nine-thirty train?"

"Yes. I'm hoping your sister will feel like taking care of Robert for me."

"I'm sure of it—but I can keep him with me if you like," and she wondered where the gentleman was whom she had seen only once—and if he knew or cared about Edah's mission.

"Thank you very much, Marie—but I'll take Robert with me."

Upon arriving at Brander that night Edah, and Robert who had slept all the way over—were carried to Marie's home.

Edah put her boy to bed and waited till he slept before leaving. Although he made friends at once with Hattie—having often heard Marie speak of her—still all was strange to him and it was long before he slept.

'Twas midnight when she entered the frame structure used as a hospital by the King's Daughters and introduced herself to the night nurse in charge, asking, "How is he?"

"Quite low and only rational at intervals. I'm very glad you've come, for he has called for you so much."

"Did he ask for me when he was conscious of what he was saying?"

"No, I think not."

Edah laid aside her long coat and appeared in her nurse's costume saying, "I'm ready."

But she was hardly prepared for the ravages the disease had already made in the face so dear to her.

She was confident now that the germs of the malady were already at work in his system when she saw him not yet two weeks ago by actual reckoning—but which seemed years in the living.

She knelt by his bedside and took the unresisting hand in hers—felt for the pulse in the wrist—read-

justed the ice cap on his head and began the ceaseless sponging.

The fever-parched lips occasionally murmured her name during the night—filling her with anguish.

But even this dark and forbidding cloud had a trace of silver lining—"he could not know—could not have heard of the man who had come to take the place that was denied him!"

And a prayer of thankfulness rose from her heart that he had been spared that—which she knew only too well would have meant torture to him—"and she could never have explained."

Day and night she kept up her watchful vigil with only little intervals of sleep till the end came the following week.

As the morning light was breaking the change came;—his eyes which looked into hers, deep and dark with the mystery of Eternity's dawn spreading out before them—sent a message from his soul to hers of loving recognition.

In an instant she was on her knees by his side and bending her face above him—"Past their meeting lips a spirit fled."

Crushed—ill—weary and worn, she crept away to bed—and before long spent Nature yielded to her own wonderful restorative—re-vitalizer,—and Edah slept.

Haggard and pale, a day later, she went to get her boy. They had never been separated before and at sight of his mother Robert sprang into her arms and cried out his first real sorrow on her sympathetic breast while she held him close—choking back a sob or two in her own throat.

After the greetings upon their home-coming were over Robert began looking through the house; not finding the object of his search he returned to the living-room where all were gathered—Edah holding Billy, who looked supremely happy, on her lap.

“Where’s Mr. Maxwell? I should think he would be back—he said he wouldn’t stay long, didn’t he, mothey?”

Marie and Mrs. Johnson exchanged glances while his mother said absently “I think so.”

Many times the next few days Robert asked and wondered about his return but aside from his inquiries nothing was said about James Maxwell; only Lena Johnson volunteered the information that a few days after he left he had sent some money to her husband to have his trunk expressed to him.

So he dropped out of their lives.

The little family gradually settled back into their accustomed groove.

The winter came on slowly and the same changing views presented themselves before Edah’s eyes—but they saw not as of yore.

She did her work conscientiously but the joyous, light-hearted spirit was gone.

Marie often came accompanied by Jack who tried in every way possible to atone for his former feeling of distrust toward Edah, which she saw and understood, and in return tried to rejoice with them in their new-found love for each other.

But at best it was only half-hearted.

Vainly she took herself to task for this feeling of indifference—this lack of interest—but she could not make herself the spontaneous, child-like being she had been.

This struggle with herself went on all winter—and she would sigh often and say—“when Spring comes with its fresh new life it will be different.”

Eric and Lena Johnson re-doubled their efforts to help her in every way possible and she was grateful and tried to smile and look happy for their sakes.

But what the Spring alone could not do—love could and did accomplish.

The daily, hourly care of Billy had worked wonders. His eyes lost their lack-luster expression; his personality—individuality—had been aroused and the little legs were now usable.

Love had awakened the latent, responsive spark within his own little breast and fanned it into brightness, and unremitting care and attention had done the rest.

Billy never was the merry, rollicking child her own boy had been.

The early, unrelenting forces had been fundamentally against him. The fun, frolic and *ginger* in the make-up of ordinary children had been left out of his composition, and Edah's mournful and sorrowing condition had prevented her from seeking to enkindle the playful spirit which is the rightful inheritance of childhood.

But he made up in loving affection what he lacked in other directions.

Half a dozen times a day the little fellow would run and stand by Edah's side looking up at her.

She would smile down at him and say, "Does Billy love mothey?" and the child would repeat, "Billy love mothey," and lay his cheek against her hand.

And then Edah would think, "it's love!—love!—that is the crying need of the little waifs housed in the overflowing orphan asylums, and love!—love!—is the yearning call from the great mother-heart of the unmated women of the land;—uncertain and precarious livelihood is the obstacle in the way of the only right and happy solution.

"Oh," she thought, "if only the expensive and awful Dreadnoughts and the Army and Navy—which are living insults to Him Who spake the sermon on the Mount!—the costly and magnificent churches which according to what He said are not needed—*"Where two or three are gathered together in My*

name *there* am I in their midst!"—and the orphan asylums, were dispensed with and the expenditure—outlay, used in their construction and maintenance made into a foundation fund to pension these unmated women to 'mother' the orphans of the land!"

"The ages never before saw the forward strides humanity would then take!" and her eyes grew deep and dark and luminous with the thought.

And there were times when she fell a-dreaming of another "Castle Industrie" with Marie and Jack at its head,—and she would scheme, plan and contrive to see how it might be possible to make the income that was sufficient for one, do for two.

There were only two ways; one was to encroach on the principal—in other words, "slowly kill the goose that laid the golden eggs"—or have more faith, lean harder on the Unseen Arm.

She knew the latter was the right way, but when her mind was almost ready to trust, such lines as, "The Lord helps those who help themselves" or, "Trust in the Lord, *and keep your powder dry*," would come unbidden into her thoughts, making her waver and hesitate, and she was never quite able to forsake all visible, earthly means of support and live on faith.

But this thinking of others worked out good in a way of which she was not conscious at the time;—it helped her to forget herself—her own griefs and woes: her own sorrow was lost in the larger, greater troubles and needs of the many.

CHAPTER XXI.

EDAH stood on her little front porch gazing mechanically—aimlessly out over the peaceful green fields stretching away in gentle undulations to the south and west, but her mind was not in harmony with the scene.

She felt more depressed than for many days—why—she did not know.

“Perhaps because Robert had persisted in talking of Philip. Or was it the glorious unclouded sunshine of a perfect summer day as it drew to its close? or the scent of the flowers that were wafted to her on the air—or all of these combined?”

And she sorrowfully contrasted herself with the joyous, light-hearted girl-woman who waited, as she was standing now, so many, many times for a sight of a beloved face and form that would come nevermore.

Unutterably sad she turned about and went indoors where she busied herself with the children's early supper—seeking in action to turn her mind from vain thoughts of the irrevocable past.

While they were sitting around the table on their screened-in back porch their neighbor entered.

As usual she was given a warm and rather noisy welcome—for they were all fond of her—and Robert sprang up to make a place for her at the table.

“Never mind, Robert;” and turning to Edah,—“I stay with the children while you go for a walk”—

her face full of the sympathy she could only express in deeds of kindness.

"Me go to," shouted Mildred, climbing out of her chair.

"Mothey may I go too?" pleaded Robert while Billy's persuasive eyes were eloquent.

"No—no," said the neighbor—"When you get done supper we go look for the eggs and see the little calf eat his supper"—which promise reconciled Mildred to being put back in her chair to continue her interrupted meal and have an eye on Billy as he ate his. The older she grew the stronger became the conviction that she was Billy's custodian and responsible for his actions.

"How good of you, dear Lena—but it is just your busy time."

"They can play in the yard while I give my old man his supper; no need to hurry back—I put them to bed."

Edah gave her friend a smile as she vacated her place at the table; "I don't think I shall be gone so long as that but I certainly appreciate the offer."

She blew a kiss of farewell from her finger tips which Robert returned in like manner—patted her friend's cheek affectionately and was gone.

Already her heart was lightened. A kindly deed done by or to one's self can change the world from darkness to light oftentimes—at least temporarily.

As she walked slowly along through the shadows of the hedge and osage-orange trees that bordered the road she was receptive to the soft, gentle quiet of the hour and place.

Turning in at the cemetery gate Edah proceeded to her favorite spot at the far side of the grounds opposite the entrance,—it always seemed higher there, a little nearer Heaven—beside the graves of two old people whom she often wondered about.

Her eyes roamed over the wide, outspreading, familiar distance;—the far-away river with its outline of trees, the fields of young grain intervening,—looking so beautiful, so peaceful in the low rays of the setting sun.

It had been a long time since her feet had strayed thither;—not since one Sunday in early Spring when she had brought the children with her—hoping to have a heavenly vision as of yore from this “mountain-top of inspiration,” but no up-lift was vouchsafed her.

Earthbound she had come and earthbound she had gone away.

She paused beside the granite headstone and wondered in a dull colorless way, “if she would ever again be lifted on the wings of faith to soar to the very gates of heaven as she had done so often in the past?”

“Were there others in the world as miserable as she?”

“Bereft of him whom her heart loved and still cried out for—and forsaken by another to suffer the humiliation of desertion—!”

Hers was truly a sad lot.

She looked down at the graves of those two so quietly sleeping;—sleeping through the frost and snows of winter and the heat and storms of summer, regardless of the woes and tears of suffering humanity—even of *her* heart-breaking sorrow who stood so near their narrow bed.

She wished that she, too, were lying there as still—wrapped in the long and dreamless sleep.

Presently a startling thought intruded itself upon her consciousness “had she earned the right to that uninterrupted rest?”

Her eyes fell again on the familiar inscription:

“Waiting the glorious resurrection of the faithful—

WILLIAM DAILY ELKINS
1800-1880

MARTHA ANNE his wife
1804-1884

The memorial of the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Almost unconsciously she mused on—"eighty years had they struggled with the vicissitudes of life—doubtless a half century or more of that time together: with their allotted 'four-score' of years it was their privilege to 'rest from their labors.'

"Loving hearts had recorded their efforts—'they were faithful and they were just.'"

She sank down by the stone and covered her face with her hands, while awakened conscience demanded, "had she been faithful to her trust?" "Had she been just to those helpless little ones confided to her care, during this past winter of her discontent?"

"Her lifework—everyone's lifework,—demands that the body be kept up to its very highest point of efficiency.

"How could hers be with mind and heart in such a distressed and storm-tossed state?"

Her pulses almost stopped beating as the full force of the thought thrust itself upon her.

"*She must put Philip and her consuming love out of her thoughts and life!*"

Motionless—still—she sat with her face buried in her hands, while another fierce battle was waged within; the forces of conscience—right—were ranged in deadly array against this wild, passionate, absorbing love which usurped her heart in vain and futile grieving.

The moments passed.

At last she looked up with a fixed expression of determination written in her face.

Gazing far away into the soft ether she soliloquized half audibly—

“ Philip, dearest Philip—forgive!—forgive!”

“ You must know with what unspeakable pain and anguish I say good-bye!”

“ But you will understand—you’ll know that my love is undimmed—will never grow cold,—but it must no longer consume.”

“ This constant grieving unfits me for the work we both loved so well. It has been left for me to do double duty and how poorly—inadequately and without heart have I done it since you left!”

She descended into the memory-chamber of her heart sacred to Philip and stood for the last time before the tall vase containing the flowers of their earthly love—now faded, brown and stiff, with the odor of musty closeness clinging to them.

“ Farewell,—farewell—my Philip,” she cried: Sometime,—some day, Oh! my beloved,—my soul’s mate,—you will understand!”

“ When I, too, shall have been freed from earth’s fetters that bind, we will gather the flowers of true love, you and I, that bloom immortal in those Elysian Fields beyond where hand in hand together we’ll roam, throughout the endless eternity of days;—Till then a long farewell.”

The key was turned in the lock and left there to rust.

She leaned over with one arm on the grassy mound—her head resting on her hand,—weak and worn with the intensity of her thoughts.

The multitudinous insects in the grass about her seemed to chirp “ farewell—farewell.”

The birds twittered “ farewell” with their good-night songs;—the gentle breezes from the treetops softly murmured the same sad word, and the evening shadows, creping up from the river and from out the orchards and fence corners covered her with a mantle of sable, breathing “ Farewell”—“ Farewell.”

Oblivious of the flight of time and the on-coming night she lay for some time without moving or thinking—save for this little petition winged to heaven—“help me evermore to be faithful and just in the work Thou hast given me to do.”

Suddenly a sharp, fierce pain—once felt never forgotten—startled her, rousing her from her reverie and making her very much alive to her lonely and helpless situation.

She was cramped from her long semi-recumbent posture on the grassy grave and it was some moments before she could pull herself up.

She leaned against the granite headstone quite alarmed, as a second and a third followed the first—measuring the distance with her eye, through the dusky gloaming, to the gateway.

“How can I ever do it?” she thought;—but make the attempt at once, she must and did.

Slowly and with difficulty she reached the gate and stood leaning against its friendly support, while she contemplated the rest of her journey—the long half mile home—through the darkness of the night.

As she stood gathering strength and courage for the venture she discerned the shadowy outlines of a man coming toward her.

Breathing a sigh of relief and thanksgiving she recognized the figure of her good neighbor Eric and called, “Oh, I’m so glad you’re come! I’m here—by the gate.”

In another moment he was by her side.

“It was so good of you! are the children all right?”

Receiving an answer in the affirmative she went on—

“I’m afraid you’ll have to let me lean on your arm. I sat on the ground so long I became quite cramped.”

Slowly and painfully, leaning on the good strong

arm of her friend, she made the rest of the journey in silence.

She found Mrs. Johnson and Robert standing at the cross-roads; the latter had been crying and at sight of his mother his tears began to flow afresh as he ran to her side.

As soon as Edah was comfortably seated in her own home—dearer than she ever dreamed it was—she bade Mrs. Johnson telephone at once for Marie.

“I do hope this premature call will not completely upset her plans.”

The good Lena was far more anxious and worried over Edah herself than over any one's plans—looking anxiously down upon her friend now so perfectly calm and tranquil only when an occasional recurring pain sent the color into her face.

Edah put her arm about her boy who was standing by her chair and drew him to her side.

“I think the little brother or sister mothey told you about will come to-night—God willing.”

But Robert was still so miserable over his fright about “mothey” that he could not respond—that was so vague, unreal, while his alarm had been so vital, so terrifying.

Shocks—alarms—so hard for grown-ups are infinitely worse for a child, the tranquil even tenor of whose way is so very necessary to his well-being.

She let him cry and sob it out on her shoulder while she ran her fingers through his soft, wavy hair—the curls had long since disappeared from his head and were carefully tucked away in a box to be lovingly opened and admired every once in a while—in the old, familiar fashion which always had a soothing effect upon him and by the time Mrs. Johnson and her husband had come to move the small beds and little sleepers into their home he was pleased and happy over the prospect of the new baby he was to see in the

morning and quite content to kiss his mother good-night and go with them.

So once again was to occur the old—new—strange—wonderful—commonplace matter of birth!—life!—which like death is so everywhere present as to render itself almost unheeded save by those intimately concerned.

CHAPTER XXII.

JUNE lovely, soft, languorous June—slowly unrolled itself over the appreciative city by the shores of Michigan's lake.

After an unusually cold, discouraging Spring this descent of summer was more than grateful.

The doors and windows of the house of Bramhall were wide to the balmy air.

A waiting touring-car stood invitingly in the portecochere while the afternoon shadows grew long.

The door of James Maxwell's private apartments opened and that gentleman emerged as Marjory and her mother descended the broad staircase dressed for motoring.

"Oh, Uncle! you're just in time to come with us for an auto ride: Mamma and I did not wait for dessert—but we'll wait for you, won't we, Mamma?" as she reflected her uncle had probanly not been to dinner.

"It is a beautiful evening for any sort of trip and an auto ride with my dear niece sounds more than attractive," smiling down upon her, "but I'm afraid it will be impossible for me to go, girlie, much as I would like it."

Turning to his sister he said gravely, "Can you arrange for the others to go alone? I would like to have a little talk with you!"

"Certainly I can:" wondering as she walked toward the dining-room where her husband had remained to finish his dinner without haste,—“what it could pos-

sibly be that could not be put off until to-morrow, or at least until her return."

Later she remarked the unusually tender caress of good-bye as Marjory was clasped in her uncle's arms before leaving with her father, and that coupled with his pre-occupied manner and unusual request made her feel anxious and worried.

As they sat at the table while her brother went through the formality of eating, she could not help saying, "Do you know you are certainly going to make yourself ill again with all this business strenuosity. Your appetite has not been what it should—what it used to be—for weeks!" and there was real anxiety in her looks and tone.

"Im not ill—that is, have no bodily ailment—but I'll tell you all about it later"—and there was silence between them—she more than ever mystified at his words.

"Could he possibly be going to get married? if so he certainly did not look the part of a happy, prospective bridegroom."

So she dismissed the idea at once.

"It must be something connected with business—something that was to take him away—perhaps to make his home elsewhere!"

The very thought was so disturbing that when he declined the dessert and arose to leave she shrank from the approaching interview and it was with a sinking heart that she walked by his side to the screened part of the veranda.

In silence they passed up and down the roomy piazza his arm about her waist: she curious yet fearful to know and he reluctant to begin.

He knew what he had to say would hurt this dear sister grievously—perhaps estrange her from him forever. At least it would add bitterness to her life when already there was much in it that was not joy.

Sadly he realized this was another link in the chain of suffering caused by his own wrong-doing.

"It is very hard to begin, Cis. Idol smashing is not a pleasant task at best, and when one's self is that idol it is doubly hard."

"What do you mean, James?" with some asperity in her tone—"If you think I shall believe any ill of you—disabuse your mind of that idea: I should not believe even if you told it me!" and she leaned her cheek affectionately against his shoulder.

"That somehow was not making it much easier."

After another turn or two up and back he broke the silence by saying abruptly—"Aimée I'm going to be married!"

He felt the shock of surprise his words caused as his sister exclaimed—"Oh, James! is it—" before she could utter her friend's name her brother made haste to say, "No."

"And when I tell you who it is I fear you are going to be unhappy. But if I could only tell you half of what this woman is—not only to me but to others—you would love her I know."

He could feel rather than see her great disappointment.

"Then I know her?"

"Yes, Aimée. Do you remember four or five years ago when Marjory was so ill with pneumonia? Do you remember a nurse you had at that time by the name of Mrs. Brown?"

"Yes, I have reason to recollect,—what of her? you surely don't mean—?" and she could not keep the horror out of her voice.

It wasn't exactly easy for James Maxwell to proceed but when he once made up his mind to a thing he was pretty apt to go through with it—besides he had suffered much and purification had begun within him.

In low, sorrowful tones he continued—"I once did her a very great wrong—and I would like to make amends—as much as I can at this late hour."

His sister withdrew from his encircling arm and stopping abruptly, stood facing him, almost too much excited to speak coherently.

"If there was ever any wrong done I'll never believe she was not the instigator. Besides—" changing her hard tone to one of pleading—"She has gotten along all these years she surely don't need you *now!*"

"No, perhaps not," he said sadly, "it is *I* who need *her*. I wish I could picture her to you as I saw her in her home, making the most gallant single-handed fight against unrighteousness and wrong-doing in this disjointed world of ours. It is my desire to help in this struggle as well as atone for the wrong done her;—besides, sister dear,"—with deep feeling—"I love her."

His sister burst into tears, saying in broken accents—

"She—is, is—not worthy of you! She is a—a—wicked schemer! Don't—don't do it!"

His arm was about her and she was crying on his shoulder. He waited till she was calmer then said—

"Aimée, dear, I wish I had it in my power to tell you of the greatness—nobleness—of this woman's soul;—for I'm sure you would love her if you could see her now."

"I'll always hate her!"—she broke in fiercely as she disengaged herself from his clasp.

In silence they stood till broken by his sad, pleading words.

"Good-bye, Cis. I cannot tell you how unutterably sad I am that you should feel like this. I'm leaving to-night and have many things to look after;—do not let us part like this,"—and he reached out to embrace her, but she turned away with a bitter sob

and left him standing alone with a great sorrow in his heart.

Slowly and sadly he went indoors and began his final preparations for leaving.

After his abrupt departure from Edah's household he had returned to his home—"a sadder and a wiser man," he thought—"glad to have recovered from that fierce infatuation!"

But as the days went by, he found it was not so easy to forget.

He resolutely and sternly turned his mind upon business affairs with the full intention of crowding out all recollection of this woman and her lovable child.

Perhaps by the sheer force of his will he might have succeeded in so doing—but for other reasons which conspired to thwart his purpose.

He soon found that business had less charm—seemed to be less important. There was the same battle of the giants in the political field—the same victories—successes,—but the triumphant, nay even the satisfied feeling was absent.

Life had somehow suddenly lost its meaning.

He had been given a glimpse of another kind of life—one full of loving self-sacrifice and devotion to others.

Even though a woman's life he could not but acknowledge to himself to be higher—loftier than his own;—of more real importance to the world.

The strife, competition, which filled his days—wherein his brain was used to outwit a less formidable antagonist—became more and more distasteful as time went on.

He had breathed the ozone of another world—Edah's world of freedom, purity, simplicity—and the lure was strong upon him.

In spite of his efforts there would come unbidden

visions of the tall, comely woman—whose personality was so haunting—as she carried the little crippled orphan close in her arms, looking down upon him with ineffable pity in her eyes;—or he would see her bending over him as she rubbed and manipulated the stiffened limbs of the suffering child.

Often would come recollections of that never-to-be-forgotten communion service—thoughts of which always sent his soul up—up—into untried heights of ether, and he would recall every look, word and tone of the woman who sat opposite him as she re-told the story of the cross—himself and all else forgotten,—while the child sat in rapt silence gazing into his mother's face.

Such reminiscences generally led to shameful recollections of his own despicable conduct—filling him with abhorrence.

“If his first act had been a dastardly crime, was his last a whit less heinous, wherein he had taken advantage of her convictions of right to further his own selfish desires?”

Then he would glimpse a little of what she had suffered at his hands—“perhaps to the very edge of desperation in the first instance and of heart-break in the second;—” That would lead up to thoughts of him whom Edah loved which usually had the effect of precipitating immediate action of some sort—ending the train of thought for the time.

So through the winter months the conflict went on;—the battle waged mightily within.

There was something at work in his being more powerful than even his own strong will, calling him to higher, nobler things.

He could not silence that “Still small voice” which had come unbidden and would be heard.

He finally began to realize there was only one course open to him. Where duty and inclination

joined hands he thought it wiser to no longer resist and he began preparations to wind up his business affairs in the city.

Now that he was ready to follow the dictates of his heart he began to have grave fears lest he had lost his one opportunity.

“Would she turn a deaf ear to his entreaties?”

“Would she give even a half-hearted compliance with his wishes another time?”

“Might she not think her duty fully done after giving him one opportunity of fulfilling her idea of right?”

“He did not expect her love!” he told himself.

He was humbled to the point of being willing to give all and ask for nothing in return.

“He would serve and wait, oh, how faithfully!—if only he might.”

In all these months he had heard nothing from or of the inmates of “Castle Industrie;” writing was not to be thought of;—he felt the need of some mediation less cold and formal;—“he would trust only to his own strong personality,—” and it was with difficulty he could restrain his impatience till his affairs were in a condition to leave for an indefinite period.

He had spoken to his sister of his approaching marriage as being quite assured—but always there was present with him a feeling far from assurance. He never really doubted that Edah’s strong convictions were unchanged—but there were unhappy times when he was fearful that “he might get his just deserts!”

“He was certainly deserving of little that was good at her hands.”

At last on this day in the early summer his arrangements were perfected to an approximate degree and only his confession to his sister remained to be made.

Now that, too, was over—and it was with a sad and heavy heart he set about his final leave-taking.

“He had estranged the only sister he had. One with whom he had always made his home, and who was endeared to him in more ways than usually happen to cement the love of brother and sister.

“He was her confidant, counselor, and consoler when the domestic waters were troubled, as was often the case.

“Severing the sweet and intimate ties between himself and Marjory was no light thing either;—and mingled with all was the future’s uncertainty.”

It was night and the air soft and balmy as James Maxwell walked the familiar lane between the village and Peace Hill.

The express train instead of arriving at eight in the evening—its schedule time—was more than two hours’ late.

Leaving his luggage behind he decided to walk out and see once again the place that sheltered the woman for whose sake he had renounced all, before returning to the village for the night.

In fancy he had pictured their meeting again in and under almost every conceivable situation and condition.

He hoped and thought, “he might find Edah and her boy on their small piazza enjoying the starlight and the soft summer night. They would be sitting together on the top step while Robert would be asking unnumbered questions about the voices of the night—the stars—or something at work within his own little brain, with his deep, earnest, questioning, childish eyes turned up to his mother’s face for information.

“Or he might find them together by the shaded lamp with the front door open on the porch—she busy with her sewing while he was engrossed with his pencil and paper, book or toy.”

He had tried to imagine his arrival in their midst

but always a barrier—a something—came before his mind's eye which prevented that visioning.

The vexatious delay in the train's arrival put an end to his speculations.

As he neared the Johnson home he saw a light burning in the kitchen and looking across their yard to Edah's, he noted a light there also.

Somewhat surprised, knowing their early hours, he quickened his steps.

Turning the corner, the front of the Johnson home was dark, but a few steps further revealed lights shining from all the windows of "Castle Industrie."

The sight filled him with uneasiness.

"Either their habits of life had changed or the mistress was entertaining guests or there was illness in the little family."

Instead of quietly stopping at the gate as he had planned he softly entered and made his way through the shadows of the trees to the front door which stood ajar.

The living-room was in semi-darkness—being lighted only from the two adjoining rooms.

He could hear someone lightly stepping around in the bed-room.

A low moan caught his ear—at sound of which his heart sank;—it bore a distant resemblance to the tones of Edah's voice.

Standing motionless—intently watching—he saw the figure of a man pass the open door as if going to the table near the window whereon the lamp was sitting.

Silently he turned and made his way to the rear of the house.

Through the screened-in porch he could look into the dining-room which also was lighted by a burning lamp about which on the table was scattered a great confusion of articles.

Suddenly in the darkness he was brought face to face with Lena Johnson.

Hurriedly and low—"it is, I,—Mr. Maxwell;—dear Mrs. Johnson tell me what's the matter;—who is ill?"

For answer he received a silent, stony stare which he felt rather than saw as that lady backed herself before him against the screen door.

After waiting a reasonable length of time he kindly but firmly repeated his question.

This time he was rewarded with an answer—

"Your wife is havin' her baby!"

Her reply gave him a shock—for somehow that contingency had received only a fleeting cognizance in his thoughts.

"Is she—is she very ill?"

"A heap of difference that makes to you," answered the irate lady.

Just then a louder and more prolonged moan was heard from within and the woman hastily opened the door and entered the screened porch.

"Say nothing," hurriedly enjoined the man in a low voice as she made her way into the dining room.

He returned to the front of the house, and seated himself on the steps of the little piazza—within ear shot of the sounds from the sick-room.

Every outcry was like a knife in his heart.

Suffering in spirit as her physical anguish increased, he sat silent through the long hours, or walked the grassy plot in front of her windows.

As the sounds of pain grew more frequent and distinct he made his way again to the rear and entered the dining-room.

A moment later Marie came hurriedly out of the sick-room carrying a baby's basket piled high with small, fluffy comforters—little garments—towels and other necessary articles in one hand while in the other

she held a flickering candle, evidently on her way to the kitchen outside where he had noticed in passing the gasoline stove was burning.

She staggered back—repressing a sudden scream. Gazing at him with all the hatred of which her nature was capable she stood transfixed.

“Is she going to die?” he asked hoarsely as he wiped the drops of perspiration from his face.

The nurse could not but feel some compassion as she noted his evident distress—so she remarked coldly, “it’s only a case of stubborn labor,” as she passed on out.

“*Only!*” he repeated after her as he made his way into the night to take up his silent vigil on the steps.

A tardy moon was shining in the sky and the sweet fragrance of Edah’s flowers shed their perfume unheeded around him.

He could hear sounds of hurried moving about and the short, low sentences of the man within, presumably the doctor, alternating with the sharp cries of pain.

Being a man of action and forced to sit quiescent while the interminable hours of anguish passed, was almost more than he could endure.

But leave he could not—stay he must!

He knew if he were only able to have a say in the sick-room, this lingering suffering would be shortened.

The first faint streaks of dawn were beginning to make their appearance in the pale, eastern sky when a sharp wail of agony pierced the night.

“*Oh! can’t you do anything to help me?*”

With clenched hands he sprang from his seat as if shot out of a cannon:

“Damn such a pin-head!!—No doctor with any sense would allow such prolonged torture!” and he strode like a caged lion back and forth across the yard.

Quick movements within—then death-like stillness followed the cry.

Presently there was wafted on the soft breeze the sickening odor of chloroform.

Following his inward tumult it made him faint and ill. He sat down and leaned against one of the pillars—motionless—waiting.

The sepulchral silence which ensued seemed even harder to bear than the sounds of suffering.

When it began to seem as if no longer endurable he heard the wail of a new-born babe.

With the birth of a fresh day a new life had been launched into existence.

Heaving a great sigh of relief he relaxed the stiff tension of soul and body.

Burying his head in his hands an inarticulate prayer ascended on high in which thankfulness—hope—mercy—were strangely blended.

He was roused by the sound of Edah's natural tones but could not distinguish her words.

From the doctor's reply—"In a few moments, Mrs. Brown"—he judged she had been asking to see her baby.

The tones all sounded cheerful—a fact which sent a wave of comfort through his being.

Rising he made his way to Robert's work-shop.

The sight of the familiar place recalled his last visit there—filling him with a yearning desire for his fair-haired, manly boy.

He was not too preoccupied, however, to prevent his keeping a close watch on the back-door of the house.

It was not a great while before Mrs. Johnson emerged.

He waylaid her as she was hurrying homeward—"Wait a moment please."

She had not observed him and turned hastily as he

spoke: as with Marie his appearance had a somewhat mollifying effect upon her;—his night's vigil told upon him.

She never had quite shared the latter's strong aversion to the man—although she fully resented his treatment of Edah.

James Maxwell, if he so chose, could win favor with almost anyone and he had really put forth the effort in Lena Johnson's case.

"How is—how did you leave them?"

"Asleep;" was the laconic reply with a tight shutting of the lips as she moved away.

"Mrs. Johnson!" the words though spoken low had a compelling tone and she turned respectfully to listen.

"Do not say anything to Robert or—or anyone of my being here. I shall let them know myself when I am ready to do so."

He re-entered the work-shop and she hastened on home to begin her day's work.

Lingering a while longer to make sure the doctor had gone he once more made his way to the front and entered the house.

Quiet as he had been Marie's ear, on the alert, had detected his movements.

Silently—swiftly—she came like an avenging Nemesis and confronted him at the connecting door between the living and dining-room.

She gave him a look that evidenced her desire to annihilate him, while he—with grave, imperturbable mein—quietly seated himself with his back toward her with the evident intention of remaining.

Hearing her returning footsteps he arose and softly closed the door upon her retreating figure.

He placed his chair in the angle of the room between the bed-room and dining-room doors—close beside

the music cabinet and quite out of range of sight of those in the sick-room.

The quiet stillness of all about him made him drowsy and he must have fallen asleep—out of which he was roused by Edah's voice.

"Bring her to me, Marie, that's a dear! I did not get half a look this morning."

"All right—just while I get you a glass of milk."

Edah laughed as she said, "don't hurry too much."

The words—the laugh—the glad tones—sent the moisture into James Maxwell's blue eyes.

He waited till Marie's footsteps had passed through and out of the dining-room on their way to the cellar, then noiselessly and hastily he arose and peeped into the sick-room.

Not for worlds would he have had Edah shocked by sight of him in her present condition—but he could tell by the sound of her voice that she was facing the other way—so he could not resist the temptation.

She was looking down at her baby as it lay on her right arm—with a face almost as white as the pillow on which she was resting and one long braid of brown and gold lying across her left shoulder while the end of the other on which she was lying was tossed back over the pillow.

A flood of tender emotions filled his breast to bursting while some lines which had once strongly impressed him came to his mind;—

"Twice have I seen God's full reflected grace,
Once, when the wailing of a child at birth
Proclaimed another soul had come to earth,
That look shone on and through the mother's face."

Warned by Marie's returning steps he hastily withdrew.

"Robert, love, is that you?" called Edah.

"Marie, see if that is Robert in the sitting-room. Let the dear little fellow come in for just a moment," she pleaded.

Marie knew she would not see Robert there—so without waiting to put the baby away and with wrath unspeakable in her soul she entered the living-room in time to see the substantial form of James Maxwell going over the low West railing of the little porch.

That was the last she saw of him for some days.

After breakfast was over Edah begged to see the children, "just for a few moments, Marie—one at a time—Robert first, please."

The nurse had so impressed him that "his mother was sick"—and "he must be quiet"—and "not ask to stay"—till the poor child did not know whether to cry or be glad when he stood by his mother's side and gazed down upon the sleeping baby.

Edah waited a while in silence before asking, as she smiled into his beloved face—"Isn't she a dear little sister?"

At the sound of her voice and words the spell was broken and the bright, eager look natural to his face chased away the timid awe from his features and he threw his arms about his mother's neck and kissed her fondly.

Then Mildred came and looked with big round eyes at the new baby.

She had only a child's passing curiosity and made no resistance when Marie led her away.

Lastly came little Billy;—he trotted straight up to the bed and began patting his "mothey's" cheek with his baby hand while he laid his head as near to hers as he could get, repeating "Billy loves mothey—Billy loves mothey."

Edah could get him to take no notice of the new baby—his desires and happiness were complete to be with her.

And dear, good little Billy showed great reluctance to being led from the room.

The next few days were like a nightmare to poor Marie.

She felt as if she were living over a volcano or mine of dynamite.

She feared for Edah's sake and was deeply anxious and watchful over Robert and mingled with it all she was, oh, so angry!

In fact the uncertainty—vigilance—suspense—almost made her ill.

Edah noticed that something was wrong but when she questioned the nurse Marie affirmed there was nothing at all the matter so Edah concluded it must be something between herself and Jack and said no more.

She could see for herself that her little brood were all right and she growing stronger and more like her old-time self every day.

Her renunciation that evening in the cemetery, coupled with the new flood-tide of love that had come into her life with the advent of her baby, was already bearing fruit.

Calm—courageous—hopeful—she once more faced life.

She began again to hunger and thirst after Righteousness as in the days gone by.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DURING those first few days Mrs. Johnson was sent for often to receive a telephone message at the neighborhood exchange—once, as she was sitting with Edah while Marie was taking her rest.

Edah wondered a little at the call for it was rather an unusual occurrence, but her surprise was augmented as she noticed her neighbor's confusion.

"Go right along Lena, I'm all right; you won't be gone but a little while."

"I ban't going," said that lady with stubborn determination.

Edah knew urging was useless when confronted by that voice and manner—so nothing more was said by either—and the messenger went back without any explanation only what the young child herself could suggest.

One morning after the baby was over a week old Edah sat leaning back among the pillows interestedly watching Marie wash and dress her baby.

"It won't be long now before I will be doing that myself," with a glad voice—adding more soberly—"don't you think she's very little?"

"I've seen larger babies—so have I seen many that were smaller. When you get up and about and get your strength back, you'll find she will grow fast."

After a thoughtful silence Edah suddenly said, looking out the window, "Where *do* you suppose the children are? I've not heard a sound from them for ever so long—not since I wakened!"

"They've gone with the Johnsons on a picnic: Robert came in to tell you but you were having such a fine nap I would not let him disturb you."

"Why, they were off all of yesterday! It's very dear of them to do it, but I don't see how Eric can take the time at this busy season. Why Marie—there goes Mr. Johnson this minute!" as that individual crossed the yard on the way to the cow-shed,—and Edah looked in questioning surprise at the nurse.

She could see Marie was plainly agitated, as she bent low over the baby in order to hide her face from Edah's close scrutiny.

Marie's heart sank and she felt as if the end of things had come—but she managed to say rather carelessly, "perhaps he took them and returned—intending to go back later."

Edah knew all this was not in keeping with his nature—"he was not much of a 'picnicker' when he had work to do—besides why should Marie look so disconcerted?"

"Somehow she had scented a mystery all along—now she was sure there was something they were keeping from her."

She sat silent while Marie finished with the baby and put the room in order.

As the day wore away Edah lay with wide-open eyes—a bright spot of pink on either cheek.

Marie knew the signs of inward perturbation in her friend and it added to her own feelings of deep concern—perplexity—and anxious fear.

"Oh! how fervently she wished James Maxwell would get his just deserts—and that she might be there to gloat over it!"

When along toward six o'clock Edah heard the children's voices in the yard she called to Marie, who was moving about in the adjoining room, to send Robert to her.

Marie obeyed with a sinking heart.

The boy came running up to his mother—joy and happiness radiating from his bright face.

Edah gave a searching glance into his straightforward eyes before asking him to tell her about the day's happenings.

He was bursting to tell and needed no second invitation.

"Oh, mothey! you can't guess!—we went to the river and I caught two fish!" tremendously exultant

"Why, Robert—how perfectly splendid! but the river is very dangerous, my boy, and Mrs. Johnson could hardly be with you all the time you were fishing and watch the others too."

"*She* don't know how to fish!" with much disdain—"I was with Mr. —" and the boy suddenly stopped with an alarmed look on his face which had flushed crimson.

Edah drew him close to her—"With Mr.—who, Robert?"

He buried his face in her neck while she clasped him close.

"I—I did not mean to tell—he said I mustn't unless you asked me," came in muffled tones.

"Well, Robert dear," with a terrible sinking feeling—fearing to hear the obnoxious name—"mothey asks you now."

He raised his head and answered frankly—much relieved—"It's Mr. Maxwell, mothey, and Oh! we had such a good time! he took us yesterday too!" and full of his subject his tongue ran on and he laughed with glee as he recalled the incidents of the day. In sharing them with his mother he lived the delights all over again.

Marie entered to tell Robert Mrs. Johnson wanted him to come to his supper—feeling as if she were going to her execution.

Their eyes met: there was a hardness, a sternness in Edah's face which alarmed Marie.

When Robert had gone she fell on her knees by the bed—"Oh, please—please forgive me for my deception—my dearest and best friend! there was nothing else left me to do," with a sob in her throat.

"I could not tell you when you were so weak, neither could I manage *him*—and she wound up with a concentrated, "how I hate that man!"

Edah's hand was laid caressingly on her friend's bowed head—"I know you could not, dear; you have done exactly right. Now, tell me all about it from the beginning," in a voice she found hard to keep steady.

So Marie began at their first meeting as he stood by the table in the dining-room when she was on her way to the outside kitchen, and told all that had passed under her observation, till she saw him vault the low railing of the piazza and disappear.

"I think he went to the hotel then for none of us saw him after that until yesterday. But he has called Mrs. Johnson over the 'phone two or three times a day since. If I'd been in her place I wouldn't have answered him!" with much emphasis.

"I think he's palavered himself into Lena's good graces, more's the shame of it!" she added hotly.

Edah continuing silent she went on—"The last time the doctor called he asked if Mr. Maxwell were staying here.

"I said, *no indeed!* that we knew nothing of his whereabouts."

With that she rose to take the baby whose little fussing had developed into and out and out cry.

Edah silently, mechanically, took the little thing on her arm.

The knowledge of that man's presence had the

effect of a crushing blow on the head. She was too stunned, almost, to suffer.

But presently from out her passive inertia there came a maddening sting—the lashing of jealousy.

The thought “that while *she* was lying helpless *he* had come to steal away her boy’s affections”—penetrated every nook and cranny of her being—brain, heart, and soul—and it set her on fire with impotent rage.

“It is not enough that he has ruined my life,—but now he must needs come and take the little that is left!” and she burst into passionate weeping.

Marie was thoroughly alarmed; she had never before—even through all her trials—seen Edah give way to tears.

She knew she was weak and her nerves unstrung but that only added to the nurse’s fears.

She put the baby back on its own cot and again knelt beside her friend and put her arms about her.

“Oh—oh—Marie—Marie!” sobbed Edah—“is my—my life to be—for—forever blighted by that man?” and she grew almost hysterical.

By way of reply the sympathetic Marie only clasped her the more closely. She was greatly worried and anxious—longing to utter some word of comfort but she knew not what to say.

Edah had never taken her into her confidence and all she knew was that this man, for whom she had conceived such an antipathy, was here and could not be gotten rid of: that his presence was also hateful to Edah, but for some unexplained or unexplainable reason she submitted to the intrusion as she had done on a former occasion.

After her first wild outburst of angry weeping had partially subsided Edah heard once again—as of a voice speaking to her soul—“We can *suffer*, may *even die*, but we *must do right*,” and an agonized

prayer ascended on high—"Help me to bear it dear Lord—Help!—Help me to bear—*even this!*"

Again and again she prayed the same words.

Presently something soft and warm spread over her hard, icy heart melting it into submissiveness to whatsoever was before her—even to the taking of a secondary place in her Robert's loving affections,—and the tears like gentle dew from Heaven dropped from her closed eyes to the pillow and a peacefulness took possession of her being which merged into a long and comforting sleep.

The next morning when Robert came in to see her he said, "*Don't* you want to see Mr. Maxwell, mothey?" without giving her time to reply he went on, "I asked him to come in with me, but he said maybe you did not wish to see him. I said of course you do, and you do, don't you mothey?"

His mother's lip quivered but she said bravely—"You may tell him to come after a while."

As she sat among the pillows—a shade paler than on the preceding day—she surprised herself at her own calmness.

She heard his step as he came up on the porch and through the outer door—on—on—to where she was waiting—but not a tremor of indignation or even of excitement assailed her;—"her prayer had been more than answered."

She did not look in his direction till he stood by the side of the bed—then she only raised her eyes as high as his collar and lowered them again.

James Maxwell stood for some moments without speaking, gazing down upon her with a tender—pleading—almost beseeching look in his yearning eyes.

He longed to throw himself on his knees at her side and cry for forgiveness, but it was not the time or place for that.

With apparent effort and unsteady voice he managed to say—"I have come back—may I stay?"

In calm, even tones, without looking at him—"You understand the situation—it has not changed."

"I—I thank you more than I can tell—" huskily.

After a pause—"I really did not expect or intend to intrude upon you till—later. I wanted to get the children away so they—"

Edah interrupted coldly—she resented this seeming blame of Robert—"It doesn't matter in the least."

"Is there—anything—I can do for you?"

Without waiting for her to reply—"With your permission I should like to continue Robert's lessons."

"As you please,"—she said briefly.

"And one other request I would like to make—may I teach him to call me Father?"

In spite of her efforts a faint pink stole into her cheeks, but she answered calmly, coldly—"Why not? however, please yourself—" and the interview was at an end.

He left the room with a flood of mingled emotions struggling within him—prominent among which was a keen disappointment that Edah had not offered to show him their baby.

The only thing which seemed to have made any impression upon her and which she recalled with a mild sort of surprise, was his unusual costume. He wore a dark-blue, well-fitting jumper instead of a coat—above the neck of which showed a half inch of immaculate collar.

They did not meet again till late one afternoon a few days after.

It had been warm and Edah sat by the outside door of her living room, enjoying an occasional puff of south wind—and the beloved view of which she had been deprived for some time.

The baby had been restless—Marie said because of

the heat—she always had some good reason for the little thing's fretfulness and worrying—and Edah had it on her lap.

She alternated her gaze from without to the familiar, homey objects in the room, as this was her first venture beyond the boundaries of her bed-room—and she was keenly alive to the enjoyment derived from both.

Presently she heard voices and Robert and James Maxwell came around the side of the house—each carrying a hammer and the boy's other hand was full of nails;—they were evidently bent on a repairing expedition.

The lad spied his mother and ran up the steps calling to his companion to follow.

She lifted her finger in sign of quiet and as she did so caught a full view of James Maxwell's face.

She was startled at the change—but the next instant realized what it was;—the luxuriant blonde mustache—the pride of its owner's heart—was missing!

The two came in together and stood silently looking down upon the sleeping child.

Robert broke the silence by whispering—"Isn't she sweet, Mr.—father?"

With deep feeling and low, he answered—"Very;" at the same time laying his hand on the boy's shoulder and gently guiding him toward the door.

The action and sight of them together—their chumminess,—sent the fierce waves of jealousy again rolling over her and it was with difficulty she restrained the bitter tears.

"It was hard—oh, so hard!—to think of another—and that other one *him*!—usurping her place in her boy's affections!" and again she fought a desperate battle with herself.

After repeated struggles she finally arrived.

“Let my precious boy love whomsoever he will, he will still be just as dear to me—I can still love *him*.”

When she had reached the point that she was willing to give all and ask for nothing in return, a sweet peace took possession of her—a peace such as the world knows not of.

But it did not come to stay permanently for some time.

As a matter of fact James Maxwell never came anywhere near taking his mother's place in Robert's boyish heart.

He grew fond of his father but he never was the idolized hero in the lad's eyes that Philip Dempster had been.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE evening when the baby was something over a month old Edah sat holding the little thing in her lap.

They had just finished with the supper things and Marie was in the yard with the other two children—Robert having gone walking in the pasture with his father.

The small beds had been brought home and put back in their respective places and the little family had approximately settled back into its old ways and habits.

James Maxwell had established himself once more in his former quarters at the Johnsons'—adding her spare bed-room as a part of his suite.

Upon one thing he was fully resolved;—he would refuse to again claim a husband's prerogative when suffered by Edah from convictions of right and duty.

Here he began his new life in earnest.

Breakfasts and suppers were prepared for him by Lena, but he ate the midday meal with Edah and the Children.

His mornings were spent in his study; but as time went on his interest in his work began to flag.

The stabbings, knifings, gorings of the political arena no longer claimed his interest or the allegiance of his pen.

He took a larger field for his affiliation—the wide, wide world of brothers.

He was a silent but intensely interested observer

of the daily life of one who lived entirely for the good and uplift of others.

On this evening as she sat alone in her low rocker in the dining-room with her baby all ready for the night asleep in her lap, she gave full rein to the thoughts that had been flitting in and out of her mind for several days but to which she had been too busy—too occupied to give note.

The baby had been so fretful both day and night and now as she gazed down into its small, white face, she could not but see how delicate and frail looking were those cameo-like features, and something clutched her heart as she began to realize that “*she*—she herself was largely—perhaps altogether to blame that her child was not more robust and strong!”

“Oh, why was I so blind!”

“Why could not I see the great wrong I was doing my unborn child with my constant, continual grieving!”

“Dear one,—so handicapped from the start,—mothey wishes she could make it all up to you, but she never, *never* can!”

“If only the guilty could bear all the blame!” and she fairly groaned aloud.

“But no, dear heart!—sweet, innocent and so altogether helpless,—this is what your mother has done for you! the one who in all the world should have seen to it that you did not lack for anything that she could do!” and the hot, blinding tears rained over her face.

She was so engrossed with her self-communings that she did not hear some one enter and walk across the screened porch till a rap on the open door called her attention to a strange woman standing there.

Edah dried her eyes and bade her come in and be seated.

She could not distinguish her visitor's features through the heavy, black veil she wore, but was aware

of a pair of large, dark eyes that looked at her with peculiar intensity.

The woman seated herself in the chair indicated and nervously shifted the bundle she carried from one position to another.

Edah waited for her to make known her errand, but as she did not speak, and noting her evident nervousness she asked gently—"Did you wish to see me about something?"

"Yes," hurriedly and low—"they told me you'd take my baby."

Edah fairly gasped;—"Was that a baby she was handling in such a manner!"

But she only said—"Your baby?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you don't want to give your dear baby away!" with the horror in her voice she could not repress.

"Yes I do!—I hate it!"

"Please, please don't do it. After a while you'll love it and it will love you, Oh! so much, and be such a comfort in your life: indeed, indeed it will!"

"They told me you'd take it—" she reiterated stubbornly.

"I have my own dear, sweet little baby, wouldn't you like to see her?" and she arose and carried the sleeping infant, lovingly, for the woman's inspection;—but that individual only gave it half a glance and turned her head away.

Edah passed on into the bed-room and gently deposited the sleeping baby on its cot, wondering what more she could say to avert the on-coming catastrophe.

She had seen no signs of softening in the unnatural mother and her heart was heavy with other troubles besides those of her own.

When she came back she lifted the queer, silent, little bundle out of the stranger's lap. Unwrapping it she beheld a plump, dark-skinned baby with a shock

of black hair; although as large as her own it was evidently not more than two weeks' old.

She clasped it close to her bosom, murmuring words of love—but the action elicited no response from the child's mother.

Again seating herself with the little one in her arms she began once more her pleadings that she would not abandon her child.

She felt all her arguments must be along the side of her affections—for she did not think any appeal for righteousness' sake would make the slightest impression.

"Let me tell you, for I know, Oh! so well, the joy and happiness this dear, little one will bring you if you only seek to be a true and faithful mother. He will make up for all the sorrow and wrong of it."

"I hate the sight of the little brat and I'll throw it into the river if you don't take it!" uttered with fierce energy.

Edah felt that urging was useless and she sat quiet a few moments while she rapidly considered what must be done.

To gain time she irrelevantly asked, "What is its name?"

"He hasn't any name,—” rising as she spoke and glancing in the direction of the door as if she contemplated a hasty exit.

Another short period of silence which was evidently torture to the impatient woman and Edah said slowly, "I'll take your baby and I'll love it, too, and do all the things for it a mother should, and perhaps some day you will feel differently about it and then—"

The last words, however, were lost upon her visitor for she was already in full retreat.

Edah sat with the evidently doped baby in her lap—feeling already something of the weight of this

new burden of responsibility and wondering—"did I do right under the circumstances?"

"Perhaps she really would not have carried out her threat, had I refused to take the child off her hands."

But the memory of those fierce, hard eyes behind the dark veil made her glad she had not trusted her.

And a great wave of sorrowful pity went out to this poor sister who was in such desperate straits.

One earnest, appealing cry to Heaven for help and from thenceforward her decision had the endorsement of her own self-approval.

Away—away down in her soul, she dared to hope "this act of hers might in some way atone for the criminally, thoughtless wrong done her own innocent offspring, and that God would for once hold in abeyance His law in the Natural and Spiritual worlds—"Whatsoever one soweth that shall he also reap."

Marie entered with Mildred and Billy—the latter going to his mother's side and laying his cheek against her arm.

Edah patted the dear, little tow head—"Is Billy tired? kiss mothey and Marie will soon have you in your little bed."

Giving each child a good-night caress they were soon splashing about in the bath and ere long were put in two, clean, white beds, to rest and sleep and grow—in their normal perfect health.

Marie was too dazed for words when she discovered the baby quietly sleeping in its little cot, for in the dusk of the room she was sure she had noticed Edah holding it as they passed through.

Hastening out she almost gasped as she saw Edah still sitting in the twilight and there was no mistaking the fact that she was holding a baby.

"What—whatever have you got!" she ejaculated.

"It's baby's twin brother," laughed Edah, a trifle

hysterically, but she hurried on to say, "did you see a tall, young woman wearing a black veil? she left just a few moments before you came in with the children."

"Yes—we were coming in the gate as she was going out. Why, what of her? you don't mean—" as a sudden light dawned upon her.

"Yes," said Edah.

For once Marie was too full of indignation to remain silent. There had been something about the woman that had impressed her unfavorably as they met and passed without her having responded to Marie's cheerful, "Good-evening."

"You don't mean to say you let that miserable creature impose upon you? the mean, unnatural wretch—she is a disgrace to her kind!" and Marie paused, angry through and through.

She had been possessed with a feeling she could not shake off that "Edah was going to have plenty to do for the next year in bringing her own frail little one past that perilous time, and now to have another on her hands—an alien and an outcast at that! it was too much to remain tranquil under."

"The little thing's life was in jeopardy—and you know perfectly well you would have done the same thing yourself had you been in my place," uttered very quietly but also very decidedly.

Marie knew that any further remonstrance would be useless and she turned to make a light.

Robert and his father had entered the room during this conversation and Edah now turned to her boy, asking, "Would you like to see your new brother?" at the same time throwing back the light covering which enfolded it.

All but James Maxwell gathered around and gazed curiously down on the soundly sleeping child.

"He isn't pretty like little sister—I don't think much of it," answered the boy.

Ignoring the unfavorable comment—"What shall we call him—do you like Charles?"

"I think Tim is lots nicer."

Edah wondered where he could have heard the name but she only said—"Yes, we'll call him Tim," so Tim he was from that time on.

James Maxwell had stood with his back firmly against the door-jamb radiating silent disapprobation from every pore.

He had lifted one hand to pull his mustache as was his wont when perplexed—but that solace being denied him he folded his arms across his breast in his most unapproachable manner.

He was heartily in sympathy with Marie's view of the matter and it proved their one point of touch—a bond of sympathy—a unit of feeling—which had the effect later on of making a friend and ally of Edah's nurse.

Edah felt she was alone in this matter, but she was used to deciding things for herself and it did not much trouble her;—so long as she did not have to quarrel with herself she felt pretty comfortable.

The two women busied themselves in trying to waken the tiny sleeper and Robert for the first time, and at his most urgent request, had the companionship of his father while he made ready for bed.

Some time after, Marie, who was of an investigating turn, with Jack's assistance, run down the mystery of Tim's appearance.

It seems the mother was a wild and wayward girl belonging to a most respected family in a neighboring town and the father was a practicing physician of the same place. He had heard of Edah and as Jack said "put the girl wise" to the possibility of help from that quarter.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE days that followed were busy ones.

The family at "Castle Industrie" were going through another readjustment.

The advent of the twin and the departure of the nurse were the main causes for the disturbance.

Marie had demurred and resisted in her capacity as friend, against leaving, till Edah agreed to a compromise.

Hattie, Marie's sister should come and take her place as far as possible while the nurse went back to her life in the village among the poor who were sadly in need of her services; and at the same time it was planned that she—Hattie—should help her sister in her labors and get some practical knowledge in order to take the place to be made vacant by Marie's marriage to Jack in the Fall.

Edah's life was so busy—so full of detail work—that few opportunities presented themselves wherein her mind might soar; a state of things she had always contended was more than detrimental to the soul, which longed and starved for spiritual food as the body for its nourishment.

But she contented herself with the thought, "that when the babies were a few months older and had become habituated to their environment, things would be easier."

Tim—"the small robber," as Edah called him—had been relegated to a partial diet of Beauty's milk with-

out the slightest detriment to his life, happiness or sanguinity of temperament.

James Maxwell spent his early evenings in Edah's pleasant sitting-room—offering his services as reader, or to be ready to do so if the opportunity presented itself, which was not often—for if one baby did not fuss the other one would—sometimes both in unison.

He put forth every effort to win Edah's love—and at the same time was desperately in need of an encouraging word himself.

'Twas an absolutely complete change of life under which he was living and there were times when conditions became almost unbearable; his former life called with the lure of the siren or in trumpet tones of the habits of years, and even his abounding love for a woman who gave him only averted glances and cold indifference in return—was poor compensation.

But such feelings would pass;—he knew the old life could no longer satisfy. Then he would plunge into his literary work with renewed energy.

Of late he was becoming tremendously interested in intensive farming and was reading everything to be had on the subject.

He found he had at last touched a responsive chord in Edah's mechanism, and what reading was done after that was upon those lines.

One morning when Edah had been moving about with the direction and intensity of a small-sized whirlwind, James Maxwell came into the yard where she was putting some fresh, white washing on the line. In his hand he carried a roll of white paper.

“Have you a few moments to spare? I have something about which I would like your advice.”

“Presently,” as she went on with her work.

He stood watching the quick, deft motions, as with bared, rounded arms and flexible, busy hands she transferred the contents of the basket to the line.

He had been very impatient—he had even waxed wroth inwardly—when Edah had quietly dismissed Hattie to acquire what practical knowledge of nursing she could in such short time, except for her two busiest days of the week only.

He stood watching till the last piece was gently fluttering in the breeze then together they walked into the house carrying the basket between them.

Side by side they stood by the table while he spread his drawings out before her.

“You see, I’m contemplating building a suite of rooms for myself—and the question is—where?” and he looked longingly—searchingly, into her face for something that was not there.

Edah gazed silently down at the plans so beautifully worked out; then noting the directions marked, said with the faintest suspicion of a smile hovering about her lips—“I see—you would like permission to use my garden for a building spot!”

“That’s about it,” he replied amusedly—feeling a sudden lightness of heart at that tiny, fleeting smile.

“You’ll hardly be building before Fall? it’s—it’s such a pity to sacrifice the garden now,” she faltered.

“Well—yes—I was thinking about beginning at once. What compensation do you ask?” trying in vain to look into her eyes.

A sudden outcry was borne to their ears;—Edah hastily replied, “It is the only available place—do as you like,” and hastened in the direction of the cry—her own darling baby she knew only too well.

She had adopted the plan of putting one baby to sleep in one room and one in another—so one might not disturb the other with its cries.

Tim was impervious to all sound when once fast asleep, so he shared the living-room with the family.

James Maxwell took Edah at her word and did as he liked in the matter of building and before long the

back yard was full of busy workmen and building material, to the infinite delight of Robert, Mildred and Billy.

The former was very good at herding the two younger children out of danger's way—and it proved to be a great boon to Edah because of the children's diversion.

Going into the yard one day she was surprised at seeing a quantity of glazed sash being unloaded.

"He must be going to build a hot-bed—queer he did not mention it."

James Maxwell had been directing the placing of it as he and Robert stood together near where the men were at work.

Glancing up as she drew near he caught her wondering look.

"It was an after-thought—the green house on the south end. It is for you—I hope you will like it"—in low tones meant for her ear alone. "You see there is to be a glass door between it and the library," he explained.

Edah's face lighted up and a radiant glow overspread it—for an instant only—the next it had died away leaving a dull, indifferent look in its place.

"I have hardly time for any such thing," she replied coldly.

She felt, rather than saw his keen disappointment and her heart smote her. It was not in her nature to wish to hurt anyone.

"I—I thought perhaps you might like to grow flowers for the sick and—the dead," in an unsteady voice as he turned to go back to Robert's side.

"Yes, Oh, yes! I would—, thank you very much," came the words hurriedly and low, with evident confusion.

With quickened pulses he faced about—"Edah!"

but the swish of her dress as she passed through the screen door was the only reply he received.

She had not heard his word of entreaty but she entered the house feeling strangely exalted.

"Yes, it would be so lovely to be able to grow the sweet and simple flowers that she had so often wished to send to those in trouble, but had never been able to do so—there being no green-house nearer than the neighboring city—besides hot-house flowers were expensive."

She did not stop to analyze the reason why the work that day seemed so easy—why the hours flew so swiftly by—why she seemed to move on winged feet—! she simply enjoyed the sensation, so long a stranger to her—and did not seek an explanation.

After this day "on the heights" there followed in quick succession many of an obverse nature, and James Maxwell had no opportunity in which to follow up the little vantage ground that had been vouchsafed him.

Mildred had eaten some green fruit and was sick a few days and Tim was feverish and cross and Edah began to think she was running a hospital and combined in her own person head nurse, consulting physician, resident doctor and full staff of internes.

But that strenuous time was now safely passed and she was standing one afternoon by the table with some mending in her hand—she rarely had time to sit and sew—when a great outcry arose in the back yard.

James Maxwell looked up from the book he was reading. "Was that an Indian war-whoop or only a good imitation?"

"It's just Mildred," sighed Edah. "She has been easily upset ever since she was sick," and she started on double-quick for the scene of action.

Mildred had been trying to catch one of "old

Muffy's " little chicks and the mother hen had flown at her with feathers and temper very much ruffled terrifying even venturesome Mildred into fear-laden shrieks.

When she was quieted and admonished as to future conduct and Billy, who had raised a sympathetic wail, had been comforted and soothed Edah's ears caught a sound of weeping indoors.

She did not hasten, knowing it was only " husky Tim," and a little crying more or less did not matter.

Robert claimed her attention while he explained some work he was engaged in with hammer and saw.

" When I'm a man, mothey, I'm going to be a carpenter and build houses."

She looked lovingly down into the up-turned face—" I hope with all my heart you will, Robert—" and she moved on into the house.

All was quiet within and she supposed Tim had gone off to sleep again.

What was her surprise—amazement—to see James Maxwell holding Tim in his arms!

The first time, to her knowledge, he had ever even looked at him.

Considerably disconcerted, that gentleman in a serio-comic voice hastened to say—" I fear I'm about to be translated: fatty degeneration of the heart, don't you know—that organ seems to be assuming such proportions! "

Edah stepped quickly over to the table, with her back to the speaker and began overturning the things in her work-basket as if searching for the most imperative bit of mending.

She could think of no ready reply so remained silent, endeavoring to regain her composure.

Tim, very much pleased with himself and quite happy once more was industriously sucking his thumb.

He was quietly deposited on one end of the lounge

to finish his meditations and reflections from that vantage point while James Maxwell seated himself at the other.

“Do you know I’ve been thinking husbands are not of much use in your economy of life.”

Edah—still with her back to him and a piece of work in her hand—“I,—I think they might be great in the capacity of an advisory board!” and she bent her head lower while she vaguely wondered if the back of her neck were red.

“Even that honorable and important office could hardly test the full powers of many,” in a voice that caused his listener to meditate instant flight. “Besides do you know a good many husbands have souls, although I will admit they do not always show it.”

Rising as he spoke he came to where she was standing and taking from his pocket a small morocco-bound book held it out to her saying in a light tone which belied the look in his eyes—but which Edah, with her own persistently bent upon her work did not see—“Here is something for your perusal”—adding—“it is a short, concise history of my deviations from the path of rectitude.”

She had reached out for the book, but ere he finished speaking it had fallen from her fingers to the floor.

Hurt and humiliated—remembering that time when he had accused her of trying to force just such a confession—but above all else she was angry through and through.

When able to command her voice—

“I refuse to read it or even touch it,” and she indignantly left the room.

James Maxwell stooped and picked up the offending book and replaced it in his pocket—surprised and very much grieved over the incident; really not dreaming that this honest confession which he had with so

much shame and humiliation put into writing could not but touch her heart,—even if it did not bring the forgiveness he craved.

As he walked away he inwardly cursed himself for a “Fool!”—“a blundering, tactless idiot!” feeling that he had only succeeded in widening the breach between them when this honest attempt had been just the opposite.

Sadly he wandered in search of Robert to find comfort and solace in their mutual love.

That night he did not go in as was his habit to see if he might read aloud or be of any assistance—but remained out in the dusk with Robert till the latter’s mother called him in.

He had intended going straight to his room, but the child’s pleading—“Aren’t you coming, father?” changed that plan, and they had their customary little whispered chat while preparations for bed went forward.

He often sat late in his study, reading—writing—thinking.

To-night he was absorbed in bitter reflections.

He did not often give himself over to deep and unavailing regrets—it was not his nature—but this was one of the times.

The manner in which his humiliating confession had been received still smarted and rankled.

Forty demons leered and mocked him!

The habits of years lured and tempted him!

The “flesh pots” of the world were calling!

He gripped himself with his iron will;—he dared not let go.

He brought his memory to bear upon that other time when he had tried to run away—to go back to former things. How everything palled!

Nothing was the same as before this transforming, regenerating love had taken possession of him—be-

fore these new and higher things had entered into his life.

Complete shipwreck would be his did he but try it again, *that* he well knew.

He arose and walked the length of his two rooms—stopping at his bed-room window.

All was dark where Edah slept.

“Yes, she could sleep!”

“There was no consuming—unrequited love keeping her awake to suffer the tortures of the damned!”

His heart smote him for the thought. Well he knew she had passed many a sleepless night and he recalled with bitterest shame his share in those remorseful sufferings.

He had also learned through Lena Johnson, by most careful, adroit and diplomatic questionings at various times,—the history, so far as she knew it, of Edah’s and Philip’s love and her deep gloom over their separation.

Presently one of the babies cried—then a faint ray of light was visible as Edah removed something that had been screening the small glow lamp.

He could discern her shadowy outline as she moved about the room.

He knew she was up with one or other many times during the night—generally with their own delicate baby;—he had learned to differentiate the cries.

Then something took place within his heart like the sudden breaking up of an ice floe by a warm freshet.

“Such loving, faithful, tender devotion as hers was enough to melt a heart of stone.”

He brushed his hand across his eyes and made ready for bed.

James Maxwell absented himself from “Castle Industrie” for several days—keeping to his own quarters only when looking after the progress of his building and affairs about the place.

Although still angry Edah was surprised at the way she missed him—but she wouldn't allow even to herself that it was anything more than that she was used to seeing him sit by the lamp with his book while she passed in and out attending to the two babies or sat sewing.

But soon all such thoughts were laid aside.

The dear, precious bit of humanity—her “Flower Baby”—was taken suddenly very ill during the night.

When morning came Edah—with a nameless terror gripping her—sent at once for Marie.

She met her at the door—wide-eyed and pale—her features set in a fixed despair.

“It has come—Marie—” she whispered—“the thing I've always feared since I first saw my baby.”

“You mustn't give up like this,” said her friend softly, fondly caressing Edah's hand—“you know yourself, if you stop to think, how desperately ill a baby can get and yet recover.”

For answer Edah drew her to the baby's cot, and as the nurse looked down on that pale, white form and waxen features there was not much of hope left in her own breast.

Although so despairing, Edah, with the doctor's aid, worked intelligently—unceasingly—to make groundless her own fears.

Marie moved out the children's beds into the living-room and took charge of the household—James Maxwell and Lena doing all in their power to assist.

But not once did Edah relinquish her post by the side of her sick baby.

Hope and despair alternated for days—the latter predominating—until the days lengthened into a week.

“She has held on this long”—said Marie going into the room after a night of unusual suffering which had given place to favorable symptoms toward morning—“and she may yet be able to throw it off.”

But Edah only shook her head;—hope was running very low with her.

Two or three times the flames of life flickered and almost went out, but each time it seemed as if Edah's great love conserved that feeble spark and held back from death her child.

But it was not to be.

After those days and nights of anxious watching it came—the thing she had feared and dreaded and hoped against!

Like David of old who when told his child was dead arose from the ashes of his mourning and fasting—acquiescing in the decrees of God,—so Edah bowed her head in meek submission.

Marie coming into the room in the gray dawn, saw Edah washing and dressing the little white figure.

One glance told all.

“Why—why didn't you call me?” with a burst of tears and a feeling of compunction and self-reproach as she saw the calm mother tenderly making her darling ready for its last sleep.

Edah turned her head and looked up at her—then putting an arm about Marie's neck she drew her down and kissed her tear-stained cheek.

“It's all right Marie—I did not need you—‘It is well with the child,’”—looking down upon the quiet, peaceful features. “‘She will not return to me—but I shall go to her.’”

Marie, with tears blinding her eyes and falling down over her cheeks moved swiftly and silently about—arranging the room—clearing away all traces of sickness and making everything clean and tidy.

Edah rose and laid the tiny, white waxen form on its fresh, clean cot and went into the other room.

Returning with a book, paper and pencil, she raised the curtain of the south window, letting in the early

rays of morning light and seated herself by the table while she wrote.

Folding and putting the paper within the book she handed it to Marie.

"Give this to Mr. Maxwell, please. Now, I'll sleep."

It was all so very mournful—so pathetic—Marie could scarcely keep her sympathetic grief within bounds.

"Let me—m-make you—a cup of tea or bring—some milk—first."

"No, thank you—I'll have it later. Waken me at four please."

'Twas calm and still that late afternoon in early Fall when they laid the Baby in her last little bed—to sleep the sleep that no pain could ever more disturb.

They had dug the small grave in the side yard by the Rose of Sharon bush, where its branches would gently wave above it with every passing breeze and where its blossoms would sprinkle the low mound the long summer through.

At the hour designated Marie had tapped lightly at her door.

Edah, roused from her heavy sleep, sat up and gazed about her in a dazed way.

Her eyes fell on the quiet form of her baby and a dull heaviness gripped her.

She hastily arose, dressed, and ate some of the lunch the nurse had brought: then tenderly lifting her baby—so cold and still—clasped it in a last loving embrace and carried it out into the other room and gently laid it in the small white casket her husband had ordered.

The basket with its lining of leaves and winding-sheet which she had suggested seemed too unspeakably awful to him.

Then turning about she lifted Tim, the little waif, out of the arms of the nurse and moved on out to the waiting chair at the head of the grave.

Lena Johnson offered to hold the little fellow but Edah only shook her head, casting her eyes about anxiously for Robert: remembering that she had not seen—even thought of him for—“how long *was* it since morning?”

Mechanically she seated herself and put her arm about her boy who had left his father's side when he saw his mother coming.

Marie stood on her other side holding Billy's childish hand, while Mildred vibrated back and forth between her mother and Mrs. Johnson, looking uncomprehendingly with her large, round, blue eyes and thinking it all something gotten up for her entertainment.

Peacefully sleeping on her breast the little cast-away lay, all unconscious of the deep anguish of the heart so very near its head.

James Maxwell carried out the small burden and handed it to Eric Johnson who stood in the excavation waiting to receive it.

Reverently placing the tiny casket in the open receptacle he adjusted the cover, climbed out and stood leaning on his spade.

James Maxwell opened the book he held in his hand—the one Edah had requested Marie to give him.

In low, deep, trembling tones he began—

“There is a Reaper whose name is Death”—but ere he finished the lines of the stanza, his voice grew so husky, long pauses were necessary to enable him to proceed.

Edah's eyes which had been fixed in mute suffering on the open grave now glanced in startled surprise at her husband.

The sight of his pale features stung her with remorse at her cruel thoughtlessness in making the request.

For the first time she realized her grief was his also—was mutual.

“ Shall I have naught that is fair? ”

the reader went on

“ Have naught but the bearded grain? ”—

Edah felt that Marie was shaking with silent sobs which she was vainly trying to suppress—and there was not a dry eye among the little group of Marie's and Edah's friends who were standing somewhat back—filled with awe at this unusual burial.

“ Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me ”—

pause—

“ I will give them all back again.”

With a great effort he struggled on—

“ They shall all bloom in fields of light
Transplanted by my care ”—(Pause)

“ And saints upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear.”

He could go no further.

With difficulty he faltered through the last few words of Edah's writing—“ The memorial of these my little ones shall be had in my everlasting remembrance saith the Holy One and Good.”

He closed the book and looked up.

Their eyes met.

In his, now deep and dark with feeling, she read the signs of suffering and in her brown ones—inex-

pressibly sad and troubled—he saw a “look of pity that is akin to love.”

In his heart of hearts he treasured that look and took hope that the day would come when, in the very highest sense of the word, they two would really and truly be one.

She—looking across the dark and forbidding hole in the ground—over and beyond the leafy branches of the trees about her, far away into space—with ineffable peace shining in her face saw of the travail of her soul and was satisfied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT last the suite of rooms was finished and James Maxwell, assisted by Eric Johnson had been busy the greater part of the day unpacking and placing the furniture which had been shipped from his apartments in his sister's home.

When the last book had been placed he gave a close scrutiny about the several rooms which seemed to give satisfaction and went at once to fetch Edah.

He found her sitting with the younger children and Hattie, who was enjoying one of her half-holidays at "Castle Industrie" where she loved to come for a breathing spell. Nursing did not come easy to her now that she had the full responsibility.

Edah smiled up at him—"How goes it? can't you take time to join us?"

"I am happy to inform you we are all through!—don't you want to come and have a look?"

Edah rose and catching up her red sweater threw it over her shoulders, and tied the sleeves of it about her neck as she walked by his side.

The house was now heated from the plant put in the new building—the green-house making the instalment almost a necessity.

Her old, comfortable base-burner had been sent to do duty in Philip's Memorial. Where Marie and Jack held sway.

As they passed through the yard Edah stopped to say a few words to Robert who was helping Mr. Johnson clear away the packing debris.

James Maxwell led the way into his library from the side entrance through a door whose upper part was glass to take the place of an East window. A similar door opened into the plant-house on the South.

On the West a broad window gave light and ventilation from that side.

The walls were lined with his books in their built-in cases, with the exception of the one on the North which was broken by a door into the bath, which separated this room from his sleeping apartment, and next to which he had placed his large desk conveniently near to the broad West window.

Edah carelessly dropped her sweater over the back of his office chair as she followed him on a tour of inspection.

"I see Lena's services have been called into requisition—" as she noted the bed made up with its spotless linen and counterpane.

"Oh, yes—she seemed tremendously happy,—perhaps at the idea of getting rid of me!" he added humorously.

Edah hastened to say, "Aren't these windows simply splendid?" glancing first toward the west out over the newly acquired ten-acre plot James Maxwell had recently purchased which sloped down to a hollow before being absorbed by the hills and fields beyond.

From the East window she looked into the doorway and faced Robert's work-shop.

Finally her gaze rested on the view presented by the North window which was recessed between his two closets and buttressed by a cushioned seat with many attractive pillows.

"I'm glad I did not leave out that view!" his words evidencing some discussion of the matter either with himself or Edah.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she murmured.

“More than soul-satisfying!” and his face expanded into a broad smile—showing his white, even teeth.

Edah laughed too, for she understood his heartfelt remark had reference to his flock of snow-white Wyandottes silhouetted against the emerald background of Beauty’s private domain, and not to the squares and parallelograms of freshly-turned, rich, brown earth alternating with acres of autumn-colored corn and alfalfa fields of living green, on the upland, beyond the silvery little stream with its outline of trees winding its way through the hollow between.

He had gone into poultry raising with an enthusiasm which bade fair to rival his interest in intensive farming.

As they walked back into the library—“You like the views from the windows but you have not yet said what you think of my domicile;” questioning more closely with his keen, blue eyes than with his words.

She paused before replying—glancing slowly about the room—“It—is—so—luxurious.”

Still regarding her very intently—“They are only inanimate objects and as such cannot have any moral value. “’Tis only the wrong use of right things which harms.”

Turning rather abruptly he began searching for something among his papers and letters in the various compartments and pigeon-holes of his desk.

Had he been less preoccupied he might have seen that Edah was strangely agitated.

She had begun to feel faint and sick, as memory, at sight of these remembered belongings run the gamut of her varied emotions from that intoxicating night when first she saw the interior of James Maxwell’s apartments—down—up—through all the intermediate shades, until the present time.

She moved on down into the plant-house scarcely knowing whither she went.

But she suddenly became aware of a transformation there.

Instead of her few plants potted by her own hands—she found herself amid a small-sized jungle of graceful palms and flowing ferns,—many new plants in bloom and more giving promise.

Without stopping for a minute examination she turned about and hastily retraced her steps.

James Maxwell was awaiting her.

“How good of you!” extending her hand and smiling through unshed tears—“but however did you manage to escape my eye?”

Their hands had not touched since that memorable Sunday afternoon when he had said good-bye to her—as he thought—forever.

Now his fingers closed over hers with a warm, firm clasp as if they never meant to loosen—while he looked into her eyes with a steady, searching gaze which she found most uncomfortable to face, all the while being conscious of the blood slowly mounting to her temples.

“It was difficult I grant you;—the wagon has been standing in the lee of Eric’s barn the greater part of the day, and if it had not been for Hattie’s opportune arrival, would be there yet, I suppose,” leading her to his roomy lounge as he spoke.

He seated himself by her side and for the first time Edah noticed he held in his other hand the same small, morocco-bound book which had occasioned so much unpleasantness only a few short weeks before.

With a great sinking of the heart she heard him say in tones almost compelling as he opened the book—“Will you read it aloud to me or shall I read it to you?”

“Oh, neither—neither! if it must be read together—

let it be done silently," in an almost inaudible voice.

With eyes full of horror—at times blinded by tears—she read till he had turned a few pages.

"Must I go on?" she faltered.

In a hard, dry voice he commanded, "Read on!"

When *she* entered the narrative, although like the others under a fictitious name, she put one hand over the page and covered her eyes with the other.

"I cannot go on—please, *please* do not ask it."

He closed the book and put it in his breast pocket; sorry she had not read to the end for he wanted her to know he had not been faithless since their second union.

In low, deep, broken tones—"Edah—wife—purest and best of women—will you—can you—ever forgive me? I'm not worthy your loving forgiveness I know, but—" pleadingly—beseechingly—"I want it above all else.

"Tell me, dearest, that you do forgive;" and he buried his head in his hands—elbows resting on his knees.

"Oh, James!" with a sob in her throat—"I—I—why, I, myself, am a suppliant for mercy! let us kneel together and ask God to forgive us both."

She slipped to her knees by the side of the lounge and bowed her beautiful head—he kneeling by her side.

Tremblingly, tearfully, her voice arose in pleading supplication.

"Our Father which art in Heaven—look down in mercy upon Thy penitent children and forgive—Oh, forgive! the sins of their lives.

"Make us over new this day.

"Lead us ever onward and upward and may we be evermore Thy humble, obedient children."

"Amen" and "Amen"—said the woman's voice and man's.

The air about them was tremulous with a holy, sanctified peace which settled down upon their waiting souls as they remained a while in silent communion.

When they stood once more, face to face, James Maxwell clasped his wife's two hands in his—those busy, ministering hands which he so loved to watch—and reverently kissed her pure brow thus sealing their new and higher life together.

With hand clasped in hand they went out into the early sunset of the Fall day—comrades, friends forevermore.

Lena Johnson standing in her kitchen door saw them as they were crossing the area-way.

The slanting beams of the autumn sun transformed Edah's braids into a royal crown and the radiance of their happy faces was something more than the reflection of the evening's rosy glow.

And Lena Johnson saw and was glad.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was Robert's eighth birthday and his mother had made a little unusual preparation for their evening meal and he was to carry a few simple cakes and toys to some neighboring children who were less favored than they—the eldest of whom, about Robert's age, came every weekday to share the hour of educational instruction in James Maxwell's study.

That part of his education embracing the three "R's" was given over to the father—but the children's religious training—the daily tasks and hourly practice of the Golden Rule—was the mother's privilege and duty.

"Mothey," said Robert, who had been helping pack the small basket, "May I take Tim with me?"

Mildred, who had been an interested onlooker—although not invited—shouted, "Mothey, Mothey, let me go too!"

Edah said, replying to her son, "Yes, Robert dear; but you know you will have to go very slowly, for his little legs are not so long as yours, and look carefully after Sister.

But it developed before Mildred could leave, a fresh dress was necessary to replace the torn frock that had itself been perfectly whole a short time before.

Edah gave a small sigh of resignation.

It was Mildred's chronic state to be found with a torn frock;—and there flitted through her mind an oft-repeated, laughing threat, to make the child's clothes in future out of oil-cloth.

Billy had been looking wistfully up into his mother's face while the preparations were going forward—but said not a word.

She gave him a reassuring smile, tenderly patting his little tow-head,—“ Yes, precious, you're going too.”

Edah never could tell why it was the mechanism of her heart seemed to work with a double action when Billy was under contemplation.

Perhaps because there was so much of pity mingled with her love for him aroused by his patient, pathetic way of accepting whatever came.

At last the small cavalcade moved off and Edah watched them from the door with the love-light shining in her eyes.

Then turning she lifted baby Peggy up out of her go-cart and after giving her several endearing squeezes and gently poking her in various vulnerable spots to elicit the gurgling laugh she so loved to hear, she deposited her on one end of the roomy lounge in the window recess—drew back the muslin curtains to let in all the air that was moving and returned to finish up her evening work.

James Maxwell had urgently requested that the fair, dainty, little girl who had come to comfort them after “ Flower Baby's ” death should be called Edah ;—but as he said, “ For every day use Peggy would do.”

As Edah busied herself in the other room she occasionally glanced in passing the open door, at the small, white-robed occupant of the lounge—or paused a moment to give heed to her baby's apostrophe to her own two little hands: and as her ears caught the sound of the soft, low cooing, she thought it sweeter than must have been the music of the spheres in Creation's Dawn when the morning stars sang together for joy.

Beautiful in face and form, healthy in body, happy in disposition—she had been begotten in love and

nourished in peace, tranquillity and contentment—so was endowed from the beginning of her existence with the foundations of a personality which should be the rightful heritage of every child.

When the last one of the many duties the evening always brought with it was finished, she passed into the bath-room, hung her kitchen apron on its accustomed peg—drew her low rocker into a convenient position—gathered together basin, towels, soap and night clothes—hastening her preparations, for the sound of the sleepy song had grown still.

Then softly moving through the long bed-room she paused in front of the connecting door at the sight that met her eyes.

The baby was lying in the abandonment of sleepy childhood, each small arm with its closed fist lifted on either side its little head, and looking down upon the beautiful picture stood her husband.

Light as had been her step, he felt her presence near and without turning his head reached out an arm that the next moment encircled the form of the woman he loved who nestled close to his side.

Thus they walked out into the deepening twilight to meet at the gate the returning quartette whom dusk had almost overtaken.

“Mothey,” said Robert with evident relief in his tones—“Tim cried because he was afraid of the dark. I believe he thought we was lost”—uttered with much scorn—“but I knew we wasn’t!”

At Robert’s recital, recollections of his troubles overcame him and Tim again lifted up his voice in loud lamentations.

Edah stooped and gathered him in her arms and snuggled his tear-stained face in her neck, murmuring, “Poor tired baby—tired little fellow,” as she led the way into the house, Billy clinging to her skirts.

James Maxwell followed clasping a hand each of Mildred and Robert.

The stars from out their fathomless depths beamed softly down through the still summer night in tender benedictions upon this humble home so full of work and happiness.

THE END.

